

Final Evaluation Report of the Idaho State Improvement Grant: Improving Results Initiative

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Introduction to the Idaho SIG Final Report

The original need for the SIG

The 1998 application for State Improvement Grant (SIG) funds described Idaho as a sparsely populated rural agricultural state with a low tax base and a history of ranking 47 in the nation in terms of per pupil expenditures (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Although allocating a relatively low amount of resources for public education, the state described a rich pool of invested stakeholders who had been actively engaged in efforts to improve educational results for children and youth, including those with disabilities.

Idaho children and youth with disabilities were not experiencing positive outcomes in comparison to their peers. They were half as likely to graduate and twice as likely to drop out of school compared to all students in Idaho (Idaho Department of Education, Bureau of Finance, 1997, and U.S. Department of Education Report to Congress, 1996). Special education students were achieving significantly below their peers by an average of 39 percentile points on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and Test of Achievement and Proficiency (Idaho Department of Education, Bureau of Instruction, 1998). These dismal results had occurred even though Idaho's active stakeholders including the Special Education Advisory Panel, Parent Training and Information Center (Idaho Parents Unlimited or IPUL), and other partners in higher education and at public and private agencies remained engaged.

The primary identified barrier to overcoming these negative results had been Idaho's focus on process outcomes versus student outcomes. Until that time, the state had directed most of its efforts at following the letter of IDEA and monitoring school districts based upon the processes and procedures that were in place. Idaho had not set performance goals and indicators for special education students. Nor had Idaho created a data collection system that would allow the state to conduct an evaluation of interventions. Further, data that had been readily available had not been analyzed and used to set system and student goals. As a result, stakeholder efforts had little measurement of the long-term impact on students.

Partners and others involved

The ISDE successfully partnered with local education agencies, Idaho Parents Unlimited, institutions of higher education and the State Board of Education to implement the various activities in the grant.

The Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) brought together the stakeholders described above to examine the identified barriers and specific subcomponents of the SIG. This collaborative partnership, after a comprehensive analysis of all reasonably available information on performance of students with disabilities, professional development needs, Idaho's 1995 federal monitoring review findings, and other information identified the following specific needs:

1. Lack of state and local policies and procedures that strengthen the capacity of schools to improve educational results for all students, including students with disabilities.
2. Insufficient capacity of parents, especially parents of students with disabilities, to effectively participate in and influence school reform activities and their children's educational progress.
3. Obsolete professional and paraprofessional standards, certification requirements and personnel development programs for the purpose of redefining personnel skills necessary to improve results for children and youth with disabilities.
4. Inadequate system of pre-service and in-service training to ensure parents and personnel are prepared to meet the needs of students.
5. Lack of qualified personnel who are available to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities.

Products and procedures developed

Working with the partnership, the ISDE developed goals and specific objectives and activities to address each of the identified need areas. Appendix A, Table 1 lists these goals and objectives.

The comprehensive detailed implementation plan provided clear guidance for the ISDE work plan. There was also a detailed assessment plan developed in July of 2000 that proposed to collect data on each objective and activity. The external evaluator, in conjunction with ISDE staff and advisory committee members developed the assessment plan. Unfortunately, the evaluator was unable to initiate the evaluation activities and after the first year of implementation, there was no evaluation of the SIG.

Due to the lack of evaluation during the first year of the grant, the ISDE began to require many sub-grantees to conduct evaluations of their efforts. Where available, information from these evaluations will be included in this final evaluation.

In June of 2001, the ISDE contracted with REA Systems to provide external evaluation services regarding the first two years of SIG implementation. The evaluator worked with the evaluation advisory committee to refine the components of the evaluation using the accountability model proposed in the SIG. This model identifies key indicators that subsume smaller data elements. These key indicators, if they demonstrate progress, show that activities that are not directly measured were also successful. Jointly, the committee and external evaluator developed key indicators for short term, intermediate and long-term outcomes. During the first evaluation of the SIG, (for years one and two) the primary evaluative emphasis was on short-term key indicators. A year three analysis investigated intermediate key indicators. These indicators for the first two evaluations were uniformly process in nature. There was no evaluation conducted during year four or five. This final analysis of the Idaho SIG will include process information from the prior two reports where appropriate, additional relevant information from years four and five and outcome data and analysis from the final (no cost extension) year of the SIG. The Key Indicators are included in Appendix A, Table 2.

The effect or outcomes

The ISDE, Special Education Bureau, now the Bureau of Special Population Services, met targets for Goal 1. The ISDE has instituted and changed statewide policies where necessary regarding special education students and implemented an improved

statewide and local monitoring system that enable them to more accurately identify student needs. In addition, a locally developed response to intervention model, the Results Based Model, has shown promise as an early intervention, training, and systemic change model. The result of these combined efforts is improved student performance results along several dimensions.

Overall, the parent component of the SIG (Goal 2) has been successful, though not necessarily in the ways originally intended. New understandings and increased mutual support have been demonstrated in surveys, advisory meetings, and a decrease in dispute actions. Parents do have meaningful participation in their child's IEP. Further collaborative work will be necessary if it is necessary for parents of children with disabilities in Idaho to become more active in reform activities on a large scale.

Goal 3 has been accomplished. The ISDE participated along with the State Board of Education (SBOE) and was a partner in the establishment of current professional standards that are now available on the SBOE web site. The ISDE worked collaboratively with Idaho's Maximizing Opportunities for Students and Teachers (MOST) committee on several projects and had Special Education representation on each committee. The projects were: (A) Teacher Preparation, (B) Professional Development Plan Task Force (to design a plan that included how current teachers received in-service and how they met the standards of the state), and (C) Teacher

Certification Task Force redefining personnel skills necessary to improve results for children and youth with disabilities.

Goal 4's creation of a linked system of pre-service and in-service training to ensure parents and personnel are prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities has been met. The Idaho Training Clearinghouse web based information site has united professionals from Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)s, school district teachers and staff, and parents via internet connectivity throughout all of Idaho. The Clearinghouse site contains extensive data on training opportunities and collects post training data for the ISDE to use to improve linkages and service.

Although many innovative activities have been attempted to effectively address Goal 5, at this time there is little progress on increasing qualified personnel who are available to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities into this area of personnel deficit. However, completion of other goals that tie directly to personnel issues (Goal 3 and Goal 4) may still produce improvement in this area.

The ISDE staff responsible for management of Goal 6 and its many activities and contracts in the SIG maintained contact with personnel and programs responsible for collecting and providing data for the evaluation activity. In spite of the small amount of time that was devoted to management of the SIG, extra effort from ISDE staff enabled the ISDE to effectively administer, systematically evaluate, and continuously improve

the project through a partnership among the Idaho Department of Education, local education agencies, Idaho Parents Unlimited and institutions of higher education.

New learning

The special population services bureau had a significant role in the development of standards for special education and some influence on the requirements for general education by joining forces with Idaho's MOST rather than attempting to create standards on their own. In addition, the establishment of a statewide, central location for linking training has had a positive effect. Communication about statewide training offerings and results are enhanced by the web-based Idaho Training Clearinghouse (ITC) system. The comprehensive nature of the ITC function addresses multiple needs in preparing and delivering training to parents, teachers and administrators. Further, districts initiated creative measures to recognize the special education teachers' workload and to help them feel supported and valued.

Going to scale

Two areas have been taken to scale as a result of the SIG. The Idaho Training Clearinghouse web site coordinates most of Idaho's training effort, provides information for potential participants and analyzes post training survey data. It is likely that the use of this methodology will continue to expand and continued monitoring will help determine what improvements or modifications need to be designed and implemented.

The State of Idaho, Bureau of Special Population Services, has been piloting the Results-Based Model (RBM) as a research-based, best-practices problem solving

approach to support learning and success for students experiencing academic or behavioral concerns during the last four years. RBM attempts to integrate research-based components relating to family involvement, teaming and collaboration, functional assessment, outcome-oriented intervention, and data based decision-making to improve results for students with significant academic and behavioral concerns. As such, RBM is an approach well grounded in theory, research, and practice. Based upon the data, the ISDE has begun to implement RBM in over 140 schools and will take the model to full scale during the next few years. A summary report by the implementers of the Results Based Model has been submitted to the ISDE and the report will be available on the ISDE web site.

Continued barriers

Families want and need immediate user- friendly services and need time to process the findings of testing and assessments; their involvement is a complex issue. New approaches and incentives may be necessary to entice parents of children with disabilities to engage in the broader areas of school reform.

There has not been enough time to know whether the change to standards based classes at the universities has actually resulted in improved quality of teaching candidates. The increased use of alternative credentialing (emergency credentials, Letters of Authorization (LOA's) and contracts) points to Idaho's shortage of motivated people entering and sticking with a career in special education.

Even with training information available through the ITC web site, the rural nature of Idaho makes it difficult for some non-school personnel to attend trainings. Parents of children with disabilities still tend to focus on issues specific to the needs of their child only and, with the exception of the Results Based Model (RBM), are not participating in statewide reform efforts.

Several factors have developed over the last couple of years that have the potential to impose a negative impact on Idaho's overall supply of teachers. Such things as increased costs, additional state and federal requirements for certification, public demand for more accountability, a slumping economy, the burden of paperwork, caseload size and "virtual" schools are just some of the issues that may provide barriers for young people wanting to become teachers and teachers who may want to come to Idaho from other states.

Despite scholarships funded by the State Improvement Grant that have been awarded to 200 students over the past three years to encourage the pursuit of a degree in special education fewer Idaho graduates took a degree in special education. These factors present warning signs about possible teacher shortages for which educators and policy makers need to be alert.

The ISDE has made dramatic improvement in the collection and use of data for decision making and specific report generation, however the availability of more comprehensive data sets remained a problem. It was found that some reports that

purported to contain the same data had different information in them when reported again in subsequent years. In other instances, data was available only in summary form; the raw collection had been over-written or was otherwise not available. Data that is consistently obtained will be a priority consideration for future grant competitions.

Unanticipated benefits

Parents and ISDE staff have reached some common understanding of each other's capabilities given limitations of interest, resources and time. An example of the increased understanding between the ISDE and parents has been a gradual reduction in the number of dispute issues that have arisen.

SIG activities were responsible for ensuring that special education was always at the table in the discussions and that special education now has standards, certification requirements and professional development programs that are generally well aligned both internally and within the general scope of education in Idaho. The standards have some flexibility and allow for multiple indicators that can be selected to demonstrate competence.

There is a projected overall increase in the projected number of Idaho graduates who will be seeking careers in the education field due to the finalization of the program approval for Brigham Young University – Idaho. Their graduates from the College of Education will now be able to obtain an Idaho teaching certificate; it is unknown how many of these will go on to pursue special education certification.

Goal 1

To implement state and local policies and procedures that strengthen the capacity of schools to improve educational results for all students, including students with disabilities.

The original need

At the outset of the SIG, Idaho was in the process of developing content standards in health, language arts, math, science, and social studies for all students.

There was a strong interest in including parents and professional staff who represented the interests of special education students in the process.

The effort of the partners involved identified two distinct areas of need. One was organized around the development and implementation of effective policies and procedures; the other area was focused on student outcomes.

Policy and Procedure Need.

School-based compliance monitoring

To effect changes to address student needs, Idaho planned to make some significant changes in state and local policies and procedures to strengthen the capacity of schools to improve educational results for all students, including children and youth with disabilities.

One identified barrier to effecting positive outcomes for students in special education in Idaho had been the targeting of districts versus schools for compliance monitoring. Unlike the bureau of special education (now bureau of special population

services), the general education bureau and its compensatory education section (Title 1) monitor programs at the school building level. The unit for change in general education was the individual school; this was recognized through the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program that demonstrated educational problem solving both at the systemic and individual student levels occurs at the school building. Since each school has a unique environment and must select its own research-based methods to achieve its measurable goals and to evaluate the progress being made, it is at the school level that all partners come together for authentic participation and coordinated support including professional development.

At the beginning of the grant, Idaho Department of Education teams from general education, compensatory education and special education engaged in the accreditation and the monitoring process in an independent fashion. It was thought to be an inefficient use of resources and to create the impression of separate and exclusive functions and focus. With a focus on positive outcomes for all students, better use staff resources by developing a partnership within the Idaho Department of Education by collaborating on the accreditation/monitoring process was planned. A collaborative effort to promote, at a minimum, the sharing of information gathered from the monitoring and accreditation activities in a district/school, and an awareness of each section's process would lead to aligning Idaho's monitoring/accreditation methods and schedules to create multi-section teams.

School improvement plans

To develop Idaho's capacity to improve educational results for all students, including children and youth with disabilities, schools needed technical assistance to develop and implement research based school improvement plans. The technical assistance needed to include, but not be limited to: adopting a proven model of reform that fits the needs of the school; developing a system of data collection and program evaluation which uses measurable goals; creating community and parental partnerships; and establishing a professional development plan. A professional development plan that focused on early intervention, problem solving, developing effective transitional plans, implementing effective school wide discipline policies, and aligning special education services with general education curriculum was envisioned. The methodology selected was a response to intervention model, in Idaho labeled the Results Based Model. We discuss the findings from this model in a separate section, Results Based Model.

Student Needs.

Reducing drop out rates

Large differences were noted in the drop out rates for special education students compared to general education students. Based upon 1996-97 information, the drop out rate for special education students compared to all students in Idaho was 8.5% versus 4.72%. This observation corresponded to a reverse differential in graduation rates as

well. The graduation rate for the same year for special education students compared to all students in Idaho was 9.71% versus 20.35%. Thus, Idaho needed to reduce the drop out rate and increase the graduation rate for students with disabilities.

Additionally, school districts in Idaho were directed to collect and report data on the numbers of suspensions and expulsions of students in a manner that allowed for disaggregation of the rate for students with disabilities from all other students. At the beginning of the grant, the state was unable to report on these rates. However, given the significant difference in drop out rates between special education students and all other students, there was a need to explore the relationship between suspension/expulsion and the high drop out rate for students with disabilities.

Improving secondary transitional services

Idaho did not have an accurate data collection system that the state could use to determine post secondary outcomes for special education students in the areas of employment and education. In December of 1997, a stakeholders group helped the Idaho Department of Education to develop an Implementation Plan for revisions of IDEA 1997. The stakeholders recommended that the Idaho Department of Education direct more of its resources toward improving secondary transitional services (Idaho State Implementation Plan, 1997).

Statewide achievement testing

According to the 1997-1998 Idaho statewide testing results only 65% of the eligible special education population participated in this testing. Forty percent (40%) of students eligible for testing had their scores disregarded by district personnel for various reasons. Therefore, only 25% of the eligible population of special education students had their scores included in reports to the Idaho Department of Education.

To include students with disabilities in the state assessment process, Idaho had established guidelines for including special education students in the state assessment process if they can take the test with or without accommodations. In addition, a task force was in the process of developing an alternate assessment for other students with disabilities who could not participate in such testing even with accommodations.

Those 25% of the special education students who had their scores counted produced results that were significantly below their peers. On the ITBS/TAP the average range of scores for special education students was within the 16-19 percentile compared to an average range of within the 54-59 percentile for all students whose scores were counted (Idaho Department of Education, Bureau of Instruction, 1998).

Limited English proficiency considerations

The numbers of Limited English Proficiency students in Idaho had grown by 62% since the 1990-1991 school year to the beginning of the grant. Limited English Proficiency students were enrolled in 82 of the 112 school districts in Idaho with 59

different languages other than English are represented (Idaho Department of Education, Compensatory Education Report for 1996-97). Idaho lacked staff to serve the needs of these diverse groups of students and their families. Only two professionals in Idaho were both bilingual and trained as psychometrists.

Approximately 12% of Idaho's 244,403 publicly enrolled students in 1997-98 were from a minority group (Idaho Department of Education, Certification Section 1998). Hispanics accounted for the largest minority group at 9% of the student population. The other minority groups included Asian, African-American (Black), and Native Americans. These numbers were derived by asking teachers in Idaho to assign students to one of several possible ethnicities at a designated date and time and were subject to some error of judgment.

Of the total student population in Idaho, 26,233 or 10.7% were identified as having a disability. By ethnicity the break down was: Caucasian, 22,117 (84%); Hispanic, 2,636 (10%); Native American 521 (2%); Asian, 115 (.4%); Black, 156 (.5%); and Other, 688 (3%).

At the grant's beginning, there was an over-identification of Hispanics and Native Americans and an under-identification of Asians and Blacks. Idaho determined over- or under-identifying disabilities by ethnicity groups by using an "e-formula" that allowed for representation in special education an equivalent percent of that group represented in the total student body.

Results

Policy and Procedure Results

Procedures and products developed

To address the disparity between the monitoring systems of the special and general education bureaus, the Idaho State Department of Education (SDE) created a joint issues task force to address special education student performance standards. The membership of the Idaho Association of School Administrators (IASA)/SDE Joint Issues Task Force was broad based and included representatives from the SDE, Local Directors, teachers, and one parent. Additionally, local directors represented all three special education regions. Teacher representatives were all from Southwest region and the parent represented Idaho Parents UnLimited (IPUL). The ISDE facilitated work with this joint task force and addressed the student performance standards through policy, administrative procedures, and through the support of school-based activities that support the policies and procedures. The inclusion of these partner stakeholders facilitated the overall success of the SIG by establishing a baseline of support.

Recognizing the limits of a special education only task force and the need to become a part of the greater standards and compliance effort, the ISDE also participated on the Achievement Standards committees created by the Idaho State Board of Education (SBE). The committees completed the creation of standards that were

subsequently adopted by the legislature. The standards included math, science, social studies, language arts/communication, and health.

The resulting document, *Achievement Standards and Assessments for Students*, provided clear guidance about how to work within the standards-based environment for students with disabilities. Specific examples were often provided regarding instructional and assessment accommodations and adaptations, how those accommodations should be selected and when they would be applied. Information about how parents could exempt a student from the assessment process was also included. Other documents that were useful included a question and answer brochure, and a section in the *Special Education Manual*.

The *Special Education Manual* highlighted the importance of the collection and use of data in compliance monitoring. It provided rationale and systematic guidance regarding the roles of the state and the district in tracking and maintaining information on activities and student performance. The manual also provided the formulas that the state used to calculate discrepancies in service levels. The ISDE developed monitoring tools that represented a broad spectrum of methods in order to determine compliance, including a self-inventory that was comprehensive, and relied upon a variety of district sources to supply the data. Further, example reports provided clear and potentially useful data to both the district and the state regarding the performance of students in many categories.

The ISDE reviewed the compliance monitoring system with stakeholders, discussed the need for an extended timeline to provide the opportunity for the district to make necessary changes.

Training sessions were offered across the State that included portions of the SIG activities especially around the areas of data collection and reporting. There was representation from all areas of the state and included participation from 20-25 districts/agencies; this was the approximate number being monitored each year.

The result of these efforts is a new monitoring system that uses district data reports as a starting place for evaluation. The special population services bureau now prepares and provides each district with a report that includes the past three years' performance indicators. The performance indicators include graduation and dropout rates, participation in and performance on student assessments, quality of personnel, suspension and expulsion rates, and post-school outcomes. These district data reports also include the mean data for similar districts on each indicator, thus providing targets for improvement. Districts are grouped into "similar districts" or quadrants based on resources and needs. District data reports can be located at www.sde.state.id.us/specialed/DDR/ddranalysis.asp.

The special population services bureau has implemented this monitoring system to focus on improved student results while still ensuring compliance with state and federal regulations. The system emphasizes student results, district self-assessment, and

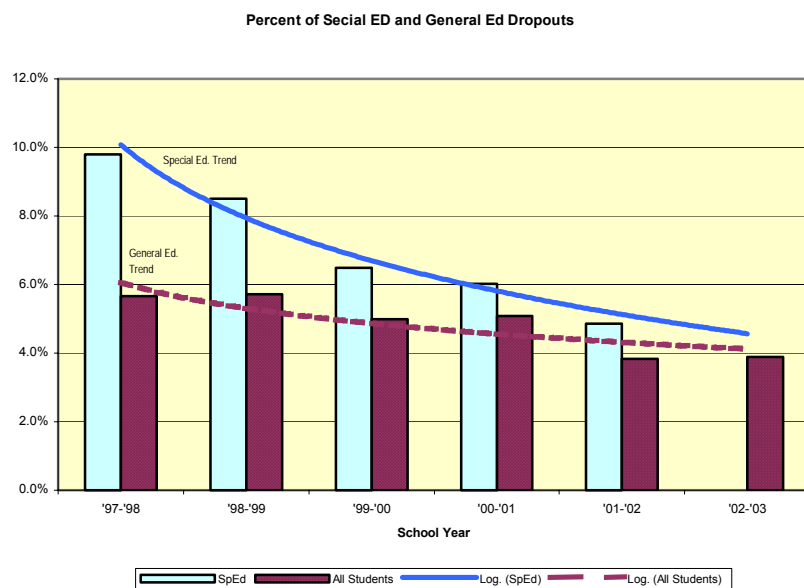
continuous improvement. The district data reports are an integral part of the monitoring system.

To further improve the compliance monitoring systems and remain focused on continuous improvement, the SDE, in collaboration with the Idaho Infant Toddler Program and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, applied for and was awarded a General Supervision and Enhancement Grant from the United States Department of Education. Completion of grant activities resulted in the development and use of quality indicators of early childhood transition, secondary transition and interagency relationships. Using these quality indicators, interagency agreements were revised. Additionally, a new cross-agency data system follows trend data on how students with disabilities are served across the three agencies.

Student Results

Reducing drop out rates

Overall student data for Idaho shows a trend towards reducing the overall percent of dropouts. For special education students, this downward trend is more



dramatic and is approaching the rate for general education students in the 2002-03 school year. Special education dropouts in 96-97 were approaching ten percent; in 02-03 the special education dropout rate was reduced to approximately that of general education.

Improving secondary transitional services

Idaho has created quality indicators for transition programs. These indicators have begun to serve as benchmarks for identification of improvements in transition services by schools. Guidance regarding transition is located in the special education manual. Idaho annually contracts for a longitudinal study concerning post-school outcomes to track the success of special education students after high school completion. A survey of students who graduated in the Class of 2001 indicated that 61.2 percent are working either full or part time; 18.4 percent are enrolled in college or vocational technical education programs; 3.4 percent are in the military; and 20.3 percent are not working or continuing their education. (The total is greater than 100 percent because multiple selections are allowed.)

Statewide achievement testing

The ISDE uses several measures that provide continuous information regarding the progress of students. During the SIG period, Idaho changed from using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) to the Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), thus the Direct Math and Direct Writing Assessments are the only consistent measures. The

Direct Mathematics Assessment (DMA) is required of all fourth, sixth, and eighth graders. This assessment consists of five mathematical problems for each grade. All students answer the first problem and will then choose three of the remaining four problems to answer. Each problem has several sections requiring answers and demonstration of student work. Students have a total of sixty minutes of working time to complete the assessment. Assessments are scored with a four point holistic scoring rubric. The Direct Writing Assessment (DWA) consists of one prompt that students write to for ninety minutes. It is an assessment of standard written English. Student papers are scored holistically, using a four-point scoring rubric.

Using data from the ISDE main assessment database, results for the Direct Math Assessment (DMA) and Direct Writing Assessment (DWA) demonstrated that participation by students with disabilities in both assessments continued to improve

from the 1999-2000 school year through the 2001-2002 school year. Both the absolute number of students and the special education percentages

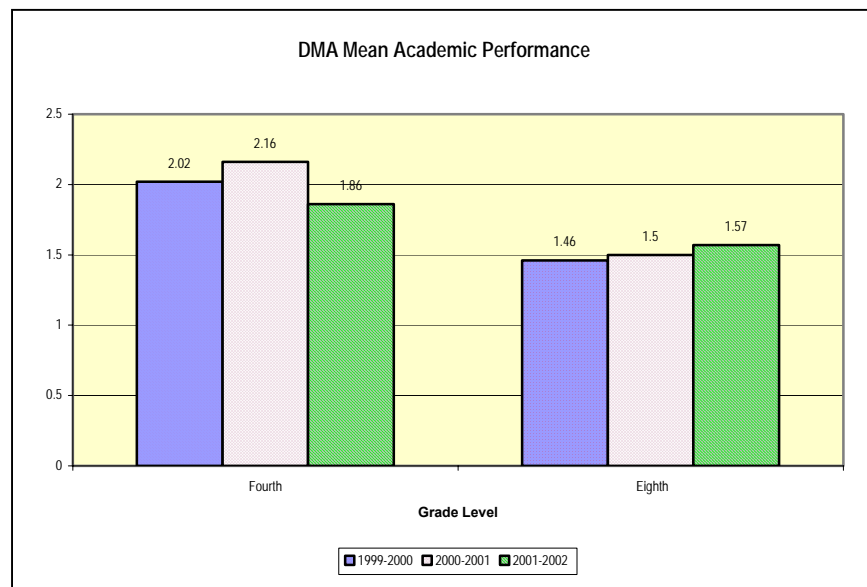
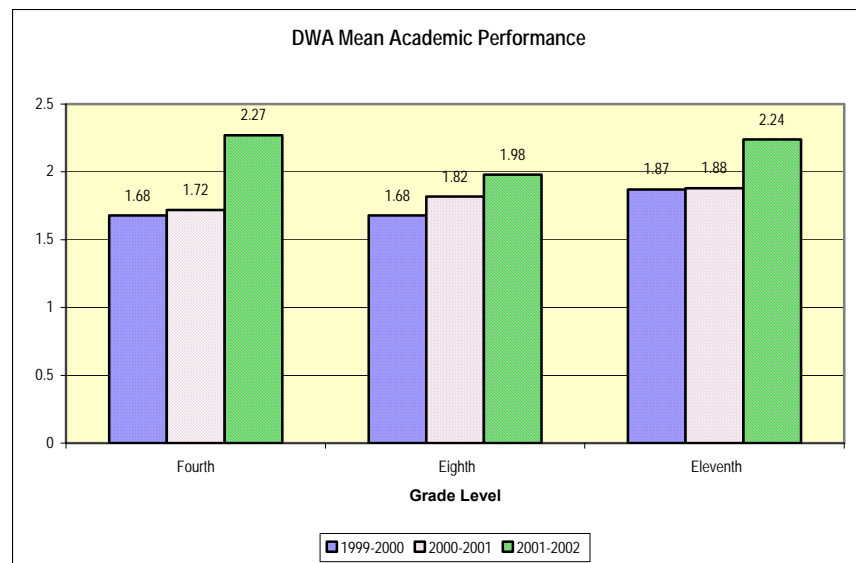
DWA/DMA	1999-2000			2000-2001			2001-2002		
Participation		DWA	DMA		DWA	DMA		DWA	DMA
	4 th	1,578	3,042	4 th	1,662	3,276	4 th	1,818	3,726
	8 th	1,449	2,636	8 th	1,615	3,068	8 th	1,725	3,364
	11 th	673		11 th	740		11 th	934	
Participation Percentage		DWA	DMA		DWA	DMA		DWA	DMA
	4 th	8.6%	8.3%	4 th	9.3%	9.0%	4 th	10.0%	10.0%
	8 th	8.3%	7.6%	8 th	9.2%	8.7%	8 th	9.9%	9.1%
	11 th	4.0%		11 th	4.5%		11 th	5.6%	
Mean Academic Performance		DWA	DMA		DWA	DMA		DWA	DMA
	4 th	1.68	2.02	4 th	1.68	2.16	4 th	1.87	1.86
	8 th	1.72	1.46	8 th	1.82	1.5	8 th	1.88	1.57
	11 th	2.27		11 th	1.98		11 th	2.24	

continued to increase. The table indicates that in 1999-2000, for example, 1,578 special education students, representing 8.6% of all test takers, took the DWA; in 2001-2002 that number had increased by 240 special education students. This now represented 10% of all test takers. Similar results are seen for participation increases in the DMA.

For the DWA Mean Academic Performance, the data over those same years indicates an upward trend for all grades.

The most dramatic increase was for the 4th grade that showed an increase from a mean score of 1.68 in 1999-2000 to a mean score of 2.27 in 2001-2002.

The scores for the DMA Mean Academic Performance indicate mixed performance at the 4th grade level, although



the performance levels were consistently above those at the 8th grade level. Students

were tested in fourth and eighth grades only

on the DMA. In 2002-2003, there was no data

reported for special education students on

either the DWA or the DMA. In 2002-2003, the

grade levels for testing were adjusted. For the

DWA, students were now tested in 5th, 7th, and

9th grades. The DMA assessments were

administered in the 4th, 6th and 8th grades. The gap in assessment data as well as the

change

in the grade levels assessed makes comparisons to current years impossible. The data is

presented as a baseline for future comparisons.

The Idaho Reading

Indicator (IRI) administered in

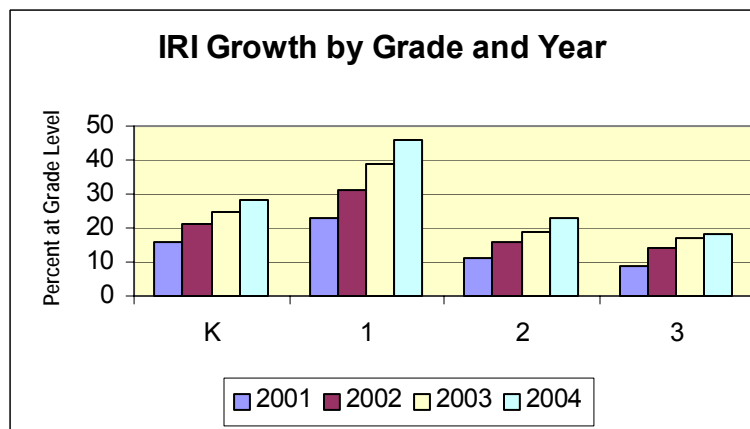
grades kindergarten through

three has been used consistently

and scores for students with

disabilities have been

DWA/DMA	2003-2004			
		DWA		DMA
Participation	5 th	1,876	4 th	1,710
	7 th	587	6 th	1,798
	9 th	1616	8 th	1771
Participation Percentage		DWA		DMA
	5 th	10.0%	4 th %	9.4%
	7 th	9.2%	6 th %	9.4%
	9 th	8.3%	8 th %	9.3%
Mean Academic Performance		DWA		DMA
	5 th	1.7	4 th	1.98
	7 th	1.65	6 th	1.33
	9 th	1.67	8 th	1.42



disaggregated as shown in the chart. The IRI was created in the Spring 1999 and is

intended to be used both to help establish local curricular standards and materials as

well as to provide direction for further assessment of individual students. It is administered three times each school year and assesses the skills that each child should have mastered at the time of testing and whether the student's skills are on grade level. The table shows that scores for kindergarteners have increased from 2001 through 2004. In 2001, the mean statewide percent of students reading at grade level was 16 percent; by 2004 the number of students reading at grade level rose to 28 percent. For 1st grade students, the effect is more dramatic. Twenty three percent of first grade students were at grade level in 2001; in 2004 that number had doubled to 46 percent at grade level. Interestingly, the percent of students scoring at grade level proficiency drops for second graders and further declines for third grade students. It is unclear from the data what possible reasons may exist for the dramatic difference between first and second grade and why a fewer number of students score at grade level proficiency in third grade. Some possible reasons may be a change in the difficulty of the IRI at second and third grade levels or a change in the instructional focus on reading in these grades. It is also possible that students who score relatively well in reading exit from special education. This would leave students who have difficulty reading as the primary group represented in these disaggregated scores.

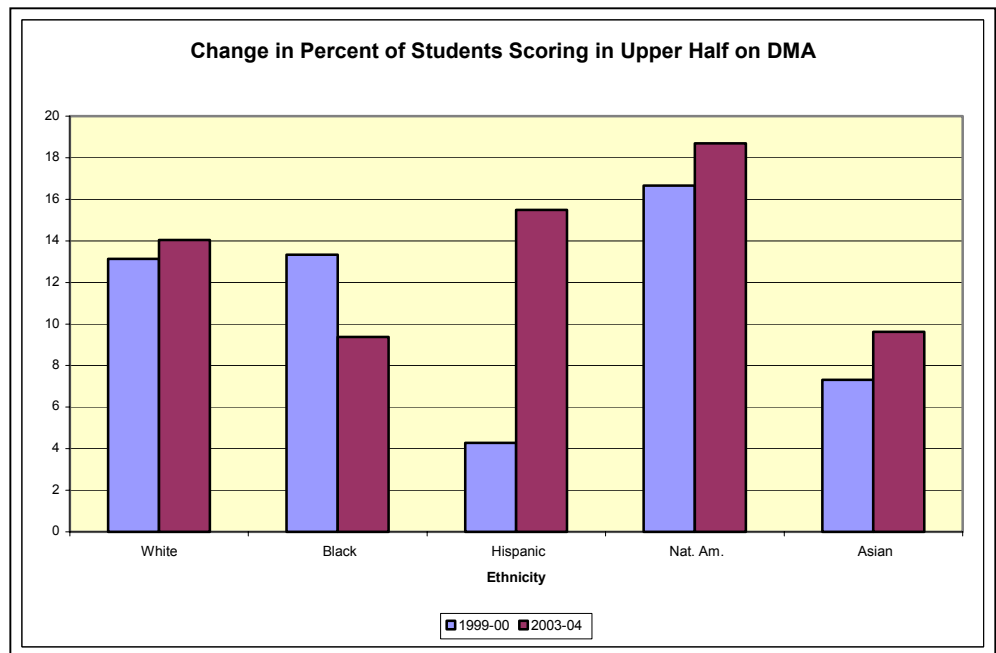
Results by ethnicity

Representation of various ethnic and racial groups is monitored by the ISDE using an "e-formula". This formula was developed in California based upon the Larry

P. v. Riles case. The formula provides a robust analysis of the issue of overrepresentation and allows the districts to place ethnic minority students in their special education programs within a small range beyond the strict percentage distribution of the same ethnic minority students in regular education programs in the district. The formula, as a monitoring tool has all statistical properties of a standard error and is sensitive to the size of a district and its ethnic student distribution. It is calculated for each district as part of the overall monitoring process.

The department also reports annually on the relative ethnic representation of students by disability. In 1999-00 the department reported that the representation of Race in Program Identification as a Student with a Disability demonstrated continued improvement in regard to less over-identification of Hispanics as students with disabilities.

However, no improvement was evident in regard to over-identification of Blacks and Native



Americans. Both Hispanics and Native Americans continued to be over-identified with

a learning disability. For information regarding representation in disability categories, the reader is referred to the Annual Report to the Legislature.

Student outcomes by ethnicity have been less well reported. An analysis of the Direct Math Assessment that compared the percentage of students by ethnicity who scored in the upper half of the DMA scores was conducted. Several corrections were necessary in order to generate data that could be more directly compared. First, since the 1999-00 data was reported on a 1-5 scale, the lower half consisted of those scores comprising a range from 0 to 2.5 and the upper half was 3 to 5. For the 2003-04 year, the scale was 0 to 4; thus the lower half was 0 to 2 and the upper half was 2.5 to 4. As can be seen from the chart, most ethnic groups demonstrated an improvement in the percent of students scoring in the upper half of the DMA in 2003-04. The most notable improvement was in the Hispanic group.

The ISDE, Special Population Services Bureau, has changed statewide policies regarding special education students, implemented an improved statewide and local monitoring system that enable them to more accurately identify student needs, and have seen improved student results along several dimensions. In addition, a response to intervention model, the Results Based Model, has shown promise as an early intervention, training, and systemic change model.

Goal 2

Enhance the capacity of parents, especially parents of students with disabilities, to effectively participate in and influence school reform activities and their children's educational progress.

The original need

Historically the Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) recognized the importance of active participation by involving parents in training events and on task forces related to special education issues. In order to assume an active and effective role as partners in a broader focus on improving results and school reform, the ISDE planned to assist parents to acquire knowledge, skills and appreciation for the change process. This assistance included knowledge and skill related to setting exiting standards for all students, advocating for groups of students as well as their own child, collaborating with a district or school team in collecting data, and testifying before a district board or a state legislative committee, etc.

Parents who had contacted the Idaho Department of Education concerning procedural questions or disputes with districts often expressed that they felt alienated in the process of eligibility determination and IEP development. They did not believe they were receiving the information needed to participate as full members of the IEP team and expressed the need for a mentor or an advocate when resolving issues with the school. They described their relationships with school personnel in adversarial terms. When an outside source, such as the Idaho State Department of Education or

Parent Training and Information Center, provided parents with information that they should have received from school personnel, their win-lose view intensified.

Consistent with the expectations of positive school reform, parents need to become full partners in the change process. The Idaho State Department of Education, local education agencies (LEA's), and the Parent Training and Information Center (PTIC) partnership planned to work together to increase the capacity of all parents, including parents of students with disabilities, to promote school reform efforts in their home communities.

Two separate surveys revealed topics of common concern to local education agencies and parents. The first survey, conducted in 1997 by the Idaho Department of Education sampled parents' and school personnel's *need* for training and in 1998, the Idaho Parent Training and Information Center (Idaho Parents Unlimited, IPUL) conducted a survey of parents' *desire* for training. Topics for training that were named as both needs and desired priorities in the surveys were:

- least restrictive environment/inclusion, transition, behavior management/positive behavior supports,
- parent/professional collaboration, and
- IEP development/process.

Parents also expressed the need for parental input in the form of consumer satisfaction questionnaires at the Idaho State Implementation Planning session, which was held in Idaho in December of 1997. Parents thought it would be beneficial if they could complete a questionnaire of consumer satisfaction following an IEP meeting.

Partners and others involved

Resulting from the 1997 planning session, the Idaho State Department of Education joined with IPUL to design a Parent Survey of Information. The intent was to determine those areas of need and desire that could be feasibly jointly planned and delivered by the ISDE, IPUL and local education agencies.

Products and procedures developed

As part of the self-assessment cycle, implemented as part of the overall monitoring process in 2001-02, twenty-one school districts and a Head Start program completed an annual survey with their parents over a three- year period. Through submission of a written response or through a personal telephone interview 391 parents of 393 parents responded, for a response rate of nearly 100%.

Through the ISDE monitoring during the 2001-2002 school year of 19 school districts and one Head Start, 668 of 763 intended parents either submitted a written response to the survey questions or responded through a personal telephone interview. The response rate was 87%. In 2001-02 responses by phone were 67%; there was an increase in phone respondents to 74% in 2002-03. The ISDE also monitored the Department of Juvenile Corrections, but did not solicit parent input through this parent survey.

Districts and the Head Start randomly selected some parents and some parents called in to request an interview or interview form after learning of the opportunity to participate through the school district or through the IPUL newsletter.

The survey contained 35 questions regarding the child's special education services and the parent's understanding and involvement in the process.

Although the sample sizes in each year were not equivalent and randomization was inconsistent in the sampling process, the stability of much of the response data in both sampling events warrants a discussion of the results and general descriptions of responses. The data below and the discussion that follows refer to the most pertinent findings in parents' responses to consumer satisfaction with special education services in Idaho and as they relate to Goal 2 of the SIG.

Results

The intent to have parents and ISDE staff jointly plan and conduct training sessions proved to be unworkable. Although there was an overlap in interest and desire for specific training, the barriers to joint attendance prevented attainment of this result. Further, at evaluation advisory staff meetings, parent representatives and ISDE staff stressed that parents were most comfortable in settings designed specifically for parents and that teaching staff generally preferred training scheduled in the traditional school timeframe.

Parent surveys conducted by Idaho Parents UnLimited, Inc. (IPUL) and, to some extent, supported by the interviews and surveys below suggest that attempts to include parents of children with disabilities *“to effectively participate in and influence school reform activities and their children’s educational progress”* was beyond the interest, time and resources of most parents who were active within the system. Their efforts, were, appropriately, focused on the individual needs of their own children.

Recognizing this shift during early implementation and advisory committee meetings, the ISDE focused on improving their services to parents in the critical areas of parental focus. ISDE and IPUL continued to meet and plan trainings that were mutually supportive and met the needs of both parents and teachers. The surveys and interviews that were designed and discussed below are, partially, the results of those joint meetings.

The following discussion and results include the outcomes of a set of parent interviews also conducted in 2002-2003. The results discussed compare response percentage differences in the findings expressed as:

- areas improved (as rated by parental satisfaction as being a higher percentage of responses to the areas surveyed, and
- the areas of continuing or newly identified concerns from the results of these surveys.

Items where parents were consistently satisfied over the three- year period of the SIG were:

- Parents responded positively that their “children enjoy being enrolled in school” (82 to 85%)
- Parents believed that they were “actively involved” in decision making in their child’s school related evaluation progress (74.5%)
- Parents stated that the district was supportive and assertive in addressing all their concerns about their child’s educational needs. In 2000-01, 69% of the parents responded favorably; in 2002-03 there was a 6% greater number of positive responses to 76%.
- Parent participation and clarity of information covered in the IEP Process, and whether parents’ suggestions were considered or implemented received a consistent rating of 87% to 91 % across all three years of the survey.

There were additional areas that had strong positive ratings or that demonstrated an increasing number of parents expressing positive views on the surveys:

- Parents felt positively that staff sought out their input into the IEP process; there was a dramatic rise from the 01-02 survey where only 48 % felt this was true to 91% indicating satisfaction with staff including their parental in 02-03.
- Survey results indicated that a rise occurred in the number of parents reporting a Behavior Improvement Plan as being implemented for their child: 52% in 00-01 to 63% in 02-03.
- The number of children reported covered by health insurance plans increased 3%.
- The provision of educational services while a child had been under suspension rose dramatically from just 33% to a perfect 100% rating of all respondents in 02-03.
- Six percent more parents reported an increase in written transition plans in IEPs for secondary students.
- This was accompanied by a dramatic rise in the participation of these students in the composition of the transition plan; from 46% to 71 % reported participation.
- There was a positive spike in the number of Special Ed children meeting General Education graduation requirements, from 48% to 55%.

There were some areas that had decreasing positive survey outcomes over time:

- Parents had less optimism over time that their children were fairly well prepared to leave school. These results ranged from 55% in 2000-01, to 27% in 2001-02, and ultimately recovered slightly to 34% in 02-03.

- There was a drop in the percent of parents who felt they had a reasonable understanding of their “special education rights.” This went from a high in 2000-01 of 79% to 70% in 2002-03.
- There was a steep decline in the percentage of parents who indicated interest in volunteering for ISDE task forces and other activities; the change was from 41% in 2001-02 to 29% in 2002-03.
- Parents reported slightly less interest in information and training than in the past. Those who were interested represented 44 % in 2001-02 and 39 % in 2002-03.
- The percentage of parents who felt their children’s behavior issues were of concern rose 9 % from 2000-01 to 2002-03.

Surveys were also conducted in 2002-03 and 2003-04. Each year had many questions that were not on the other survey or were worded differently. For these reasons, some comparative data is not included in this discussion. Sample sizes in these two years were smaller than the surveys and interviews in 2001 – 2003.

Positive Findings from the 2003-04 surveys:

- Parental input is being included in the IEPs. The number of parents who felt that their school staff considered some or all of their input into the IEP process was 76%. Only twenty percent (20%) negatively responded to this item. School staff appear to be responding to including parents in planning and decision-making during the IEP.
- Staff is discussing with parents the potential need for Assistive Technology and devices to help students meet their IEP goals. Approximately 52% of the parents who knew whether assistive technology and devices were discussed at the IEP meeting said that they were. Only 5% of parents did not know whether assistive technology had been discussed.

- Outside agencies were involved in transitional planning for exiting and graduating SPED Students. There was representation from six of eight named agencies reported attending the transitional IEP for exiting students. Of the parents reporting, only eight (10%) reported no transition agency attendance.

Other notable findings from the

2003-04 surveys:

Which agencies attended the child's transition plan?

Vocational Rehabilitation	0
Idaho Commission for Blind and V/I	35
College or University Disability Services	11
Private Agency	4
Dept. of Health & Welfare	0
Child Mental Health	11
Adult Mental Health	3
Developmental Disabilities	5
None	8

- In contrast to the findings on the number of agencies attending transition IEPs, the number of special education students that participated actively or very actively in their transition planning was low, around 37% according to the survey.
- While no parent indicated that their child had behavior problems (65 parents either omitted responses or indicated that they did not know), 58 parents in the survey stated that their child had behavior implementation plans (BIP).
- Several items about personal health insurance policies for families, district responsibilities related to authorizations for treatment, and co-payments yielded somewhat mixed results. The one clear overall finding was that health insurance issues were increasing.

In general, the similarity in outcomes from the three years of interviews was a solid indicator of consistency of services being provided to special education students and their families. Special education services provided by Idaho Districts' staff are becoming better at including parents in the IEP process and are becoming more aware of the importance of parental input into planning and decision making for appropriate special education services for their children. Assistive technology devices are being offered to a greater extent, but staff may need more training and additional information

regarding the importance of considering them at IEP meetings. A summary of “What Parents Had to Say 2001 – 2003” is included at the end of this Goal.

The effect or outcomes

In summarizing the parent surveys described above and across the years the 3 annual surveys were conducted, the majority of items were rated more positively over time and indicated an overall increase in parent satisfaction with the services being provided to the special education needs of their children.

Parents appear to be participating actively in their child’s education. There still remains a great deal to be done, however, to entice parents of special education students to effectively participate in broader reform activities and serve on task forces and other activities to improve the circumstances and conditions for their children and future families coming into the system. More effort to gather input from parents is needed regarding transition plans for their children as they move out of secondary special education settings. It is important to note that in all the topics surveyed most questions were rated positively or showed little change in opinion over time.

New learning

The parental focus on child, school and process rather than larger issues of reform was somewhat surprising. However, both the ISDE and IPUL recognized this early in the implementation process and adjusted accordingly. Interestingly, parents, on the surveys, reported less interest in information and training over time; those who

were interested represented only 44 % in 2001-02 and 39 % in 2002-03. This paradox may be due to the nature of the information and training offered or may be limited by the types of questions asked. This area deserves more thought and more parental input as the key to its solution.

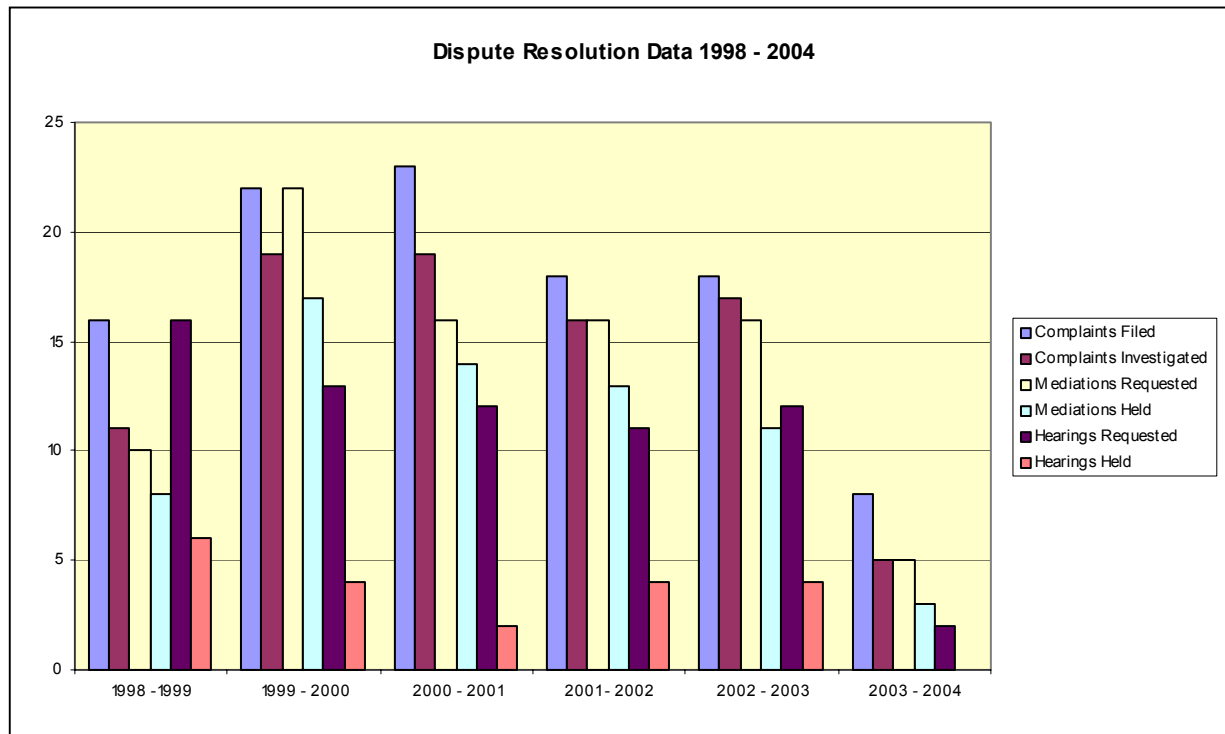
Continued barriers

Parent participation and involvement is a complex issue. Families want and need immediate user- friendly services and need time to process the findings of testing and assessments. Workshops on parent and child's rights, development of parent support groups, and joint advisory panels of staff, parents and outside experts are all necessary components to promote greater parental participation and involvement into the special education system. In addition to the specific barriers listed, new approaches and incentives may be necessary to entice parents of children with disabilities to engage in the broader areas of school reform.

Unanticipated benefits

Parents and ISDE staff have reached some common understanding of each other's capabilities given limitations of interest, resources and time. Another unanticipated benefit of the increased understanding between the ISDE and parents has been a gradual reduction in the number of dispute issues that have arisen. The chart below shows an increase in dispute issues, complaints filed, mediations requested, etc.

between the 1998-99 and 2003-04 school year. Thus, there has generally been a decline



in these types of requests, reaching a low in 2003-04.

Overall, the parent component of the SIG has been successful, though not necessarily in the ways originally intended. New understandings and increased mutual support have been demonstrated in surveys, advisory meetings, and a decrease in dispute actions. Parents do have meaningful participation in their child's IEP. Further collaborative work will be necessary to encourage parents to become more active in reform activities on a large scale.

What Parents Had to Say 2001 - 2003

The table reflects excerpts of information gathered over three monitoring cycles. If no information is given, the question was not asked in the same way or not asked at all. Questions numbers refer to the 2002-2003 spring survey. Please note the difference in sample sizes.

For each year, the number reflects the percentage of parents who indicated that:

Question	Topic	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003
#	<i>Number of parents responding to the survey</i>	389	668	391
1	their child liked school		81.5%	85.2%
4	they were "actively involved" or "very actively involved" in the decisions made during the most recent evaluation.		74.9%	74.4%
5	the district tested or sought information about everything that they were concerned about.	68.8%	73.1%	75.9%
6a	they were "actively involved" or "very actively involved" in deciding whether or not their child would receive special education services.	69.1%	84.6%	80.2%
6b	they received a copy of the eligibility report	85.5%	80.8%	85.1%
7	they had attended the last IEP team meeting	Mom 88.2% Dad 31.6%	90.5%	94.8%
10a	they were informed of their role for the IEP meeting so that they could participate meaningfully in the process	90.7%	87.0%	89.6%
10b	they would like more information or training		44.4%	38.8%
11a	the district staff sought their input at IEP meetings		48.3%	91.3%
11b	their suggestions are considered or implemented "some" or "a lot" of the time		85.2%	90.5%
12	they were "actively involved" or "very actively involved" in helping the team decide what special education services the child would receive		65.7%	64.1%
13	the IEP team had considered/discussed assistive technology devices and services	31.4%	36.1%	40.9%
14	they thought their child had unmet AT needs	14.6%	18.2%	14.8%
15	they thought that the school provided accommodations, modifications, or supports in materials and instructional techniques to increase general education classroom time		58.6%	59.9%
16	they were a part of the decision on where the child would receive services		66.8%	65.6%
17	rated the goals on their child's IEP as "just right"	61.6%	60.5%	59.3%
18	they received progress reports at the same time as all the other students received report cards		58.3%	59.7%
19	felt that their child's needs were being "fairly well" or "totally" met in school		68.7%	70.6%
20	their children had behavior issues	22.4%	33.1%	31.9%
21	(of those responding "yes" to Q#20) a behavior intervention plan (BIP) had been developed	51.7%	64.2%	62.7%
23	(of the parents whose children who had been suspended from school for more than 10 days) that the child had received educational services during suspension	33.3%	18.9%	100%
24	the child had some type of medical insurance	90.4%	93%	93%
27a	(of parents with secondary transition aged children) a transition plan had been developed as part of the IEP	42.7%	46.2%	48.8%
27b	the child was involved in the transition process		45.8%	70.7%
29	the child would meet the general education graduation requirements		48.2%	55.0%
30	they felt that the student would be "fairly well prepared" or "well prepared" upon leaving school.	55.3%	27.4%	33.8%
34	felt they had "adequate" to "excellent" understanding of their special education rights.	78.5%	65.9%	69.9%
36	they would be interested in volunteering for ISDE task forces or other activities		40.7%	27.8%

Goal 3

Revise professional and paraprofessional standards, certification requirements and personnel development programs for the purpose of redefining personnel skills necessary to improve results for children and youth with disabilities.

The original need

To receive Idaho certifications in all positions one needed to pass content competencies in a minimum number of appropriate courses as determined by institutions of higher education (IHEs) and approved by the Idaho State Board of Education (ISBE). For certification or recertification of general education teachers (elementary or secondary), the ISBE did not require any special education credit or other credits to prepare teachers to educate students with disabilities. The Special Education Advisory Panel recommended that the Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) advise the ISBE and the IHEs to require that all persons pursuing certification for general education teacher and for school administration be required to take some course work in special education.

In the past Idaho has adopted certification standards under the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification. However, because those standards were outdated, Idaho considered affiliation with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. This required that Idaho develop its own standards. Idaho institutions of higher education had taken the lead in gaining

stakeholder input with regard to standards in all areas, including special education.

Those standards were not adopted at the beginning of this grant.

Through a contract with the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, Idaho had an interstate certification agreement with 34 states that provided a three-year interim credential. During the three years, teachers would need to make up any missing Idaho course work and to pass the reading and technology exams. Unfortunately, that agreement did not include special education. With the development of Idaho-specific standards, Idaho planned to engage in dialogue with other states regarding the alignment of standards for all educational positions, including special education.

The national trend had been to rely increasingly upon paraeducators in the classroom to perform instructional and related academic duties. As a result Idaho planned to include paraprofessionals in certification standards. With a greater focus on inclusion, the state had recognized the important role that paraeducators play in general and special education. The Idaho Legislature appropriated \$1 million each year for the prior two years to encourage districts to educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Many districts opted to use this money for teacher training, and also to hire paraeducators to assist general educators to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities.

Idaho had determined to establish state standards for paraeducators that included both training and appropriate supervision. In 1993 the Idaho Division of Vocational Education developed nationally recognized standards and curriculum guides for the following paraprofessional positions: physical therapy aide, physical therapy assistant, occupational therapy aide, occupational therapy assistant, speech-language pathology aide and speech language pathology assistant. However, the Idaho Department of Education had not officially adopted these standards. In addition to potentially adopting these Idaho Division of Vocational Education standards, the Idaho State Department of Education, through its partnerships with institutions of higher education, local education agencies, parents and persons serving as paraeducators, planned to develop standards and curriculum guides for teacher assistants and interpreters, based upon the model that is being developed by the National Task Force to Develop Para-educator Standards.

Results

Goal 3 has been accomplished. The ISDE participated along with the SBOE and was a partner in the establishment of professional standards that are now available on the SBOE web site. The ISDE worked collaboratively with Idaho's Maximizing Opportunities for Students and Teachers (MOST) committee on several projects. The projects were: (A) Teacher Preparation, (B) Professional Development Plan Task Force (to design a plan that included how current teachers received in-service and how they

met the standards of the state), and (C) Teacher Certification Task Force (that is designing a method to change certification from a seat time approach to skills/performance based measure). The ISDE had Special Education representation on each of these committees. Details are posted on the ISDE Certification Bureau's website.

The Teaching Standards, Core Standards, a rubric to implement and assess the core standards, and in particular special education standards, and a rubric for the generalist category in special education plus a rubric to assess the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Standards are all posted in on the ISDE Certification Bureau's website as are personnel development standards of support. These standards qualify as a job well done in creating a more hospitable and fair method of assessing the supervision of teaching, learning, and professional development personnel support.

Standards for paraprofessional were written by a collaboration of local district staff, ISDE personnel from special education and Title 1, parents, and higher education representatives. They were accepted by the legislature by a rule in 2000 and sent out to districts in October 2000. These standards are found in the special education manual. There was a decision not to adopt standards for Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy aides because these positions are governed by their respective professional organizations.

Idaho's MOST also had a sub-committee that generated a rubric format that was used to evaluate all teacher preparation programs in the state regarding the extent to

which coursework is aligned to the state standards. The rubric was similar to the NCATE/CEC approach that has ratings of Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, and Target. The ISDE anticipated that training would begin in the state on the rubric by the end of the summer of 2003. The Programs at Boise State, University of Idaho and Idaho State were all assessed, curricula were aligned with the standards, and now official credential programs are in place to train special education professionals statewide.

The following is an excerpt from the U of I Moscow Team Report of the Idaho State Board of Education/Professional Standards Committee on the rubrics and methods used to assess alignment of IHEs classes and proficiencies related to Idaho's Adopted Teaching and Learning Standards:

Using the latest performance based system, approved by the Professional Standards Committee and the State Board of Education, the evaluation team sought for evidence that demonstrates that teacher candidates know the subject matter they teach and can teach it effectively so that students learn. Until 2000, institutional program reviews focused on input information, i.e., the quality of the curriculum, courses taken, and how candidates performed in class. While the curriculum is certainly an important component in preparing educators, the new standards take accountability to an important next step, **results**. Using the recommendations of professional organizations and national, state, and district standards, reviews now center their evaluation on three questions:

- Have candidates acquired the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to become effective educators?
- Have candidates demonstrated their knowledge, skills, and dispositions in measurable ways?
- Have candidates helped P-12 students learn the public school curriculum needed to enter the 21st century?

Since 2000, the review process has changed, with National, State, and District Standards at the basis for that change. The standards are based on consensus of the education profession and emphasize performance outcomes of knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to ensure that all P-12 students have a significant learning experience. The standards used to validate the institutional report are the ten standards listed under the heading of Core Teaching Standards developed and approved for schools in the State of Idaho. Rubrics have been developed for each standard emphasizing what candidates know and what they can do to improve P-12 student learning. For each rubric three sources of data were sought to validate each area reviewed. Examples of the sources of data reviewed by team members include: course syllabi, minutes of meetings, contractual agreements, program plans and descriptions, advising checklists, class assignments and reports, portfolios, video tapes, and letters of support. In addition to the review of documents, team members also conducted over 360 interviews with candidates, university administrators, university faculty, principals, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors.

Alignment of course work and teaching practices are now in place. Listed on the website also are the special education standards and the rubric for the Special Education Generalist certification as well as the Hard of Hearing certification rubric.

A promising new alternative to certification exists in the National Board of Certification for Teachers (NBCT), an organization that pioneered new results based standards in the early 1990's. Many states, including Idaho, have emulated the teaching profession standards adopted by this national organization over the past 5-8 years. This nationally recognized organization certified 271 Idaho teachers between 1999-2002 and as of 2004, 315 Idaho teachers were nationally certified. The NBCT also has a Special Education certification category in "Exceptional Needs Specialist Early Childhood

through Young Adult,” but so far, there is only one teacher in all of Idaho approved in this category.

Partners and others involved

Institutions of Higher Education, including the University of Idaho, Boise State and Idaho State, the State Board of Education’s MOST committee, the Idaho State Department’s Bureau of Certification, Idaho Parents Unlimited (IPUL), the Professional Standards Commission and joint groups of teachers, parents and other interested parties worked together and created, adopted and implemented standards in every area of Idaho public education. The standards included those for special education and aligned the standards regarding the credentialing of special education teachers and the class work preparation needed for this certification.

Products and procedures developed

All certification information is currently available on the web. There is also a document entitled ‘Resources for Higher Ed’ that provides comprehensive resources regarding the available Institutions of Higher Education and standards and rubrics for certification. Each IHE has agreed to the matrix of standards and how they are implemented in each course offering. Each Idaho Public IHE has these listed on their respective websites.

There were mini grants distributed using SIG resources to post-secondary institutions to align their curriculum with standards. According to documents in the

Professional Standards' Commission on-line report, this alignment has been accomplished statewide for all public education IHEs in the state.

The effect or outcomes

Standards have been adopted and the universities have aligned their training programs; the accreditation program uses these standards to evaluate whether the university programs are effective; The 3 major universities, University of Idaho, Idaho State and Boise State, have gone through the rigorous accreditation process and have adopted statewide uniformity in teacher training requirements in special education.

The adopted Idaho standards in Core and Special Education include ten specific principles; each principle has specific knowledge, dispositions and performance requirements. The ten principles are:

Principle 1: Knowledge of Subject Matter - The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline taught and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.

Principle 2: Knowledge of Human Development and Learning - The teacher understands how students learn and develop, and provides opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development.

Principle 3: Adapting Instruction for Individual Needs - The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to students with diverse needs.

Principle 4: Multiple Instructional Strategies - The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to develop students' critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.

Principle 5: Classroom Motivation and Management Skills - The teacher understands individual and group motivation and behavior and creates a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

Principle 6: Communication Skills - The teacher uses a variety of communication techniques to foster inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in and beyond the classroom.

Principle 7: Instructional Planning Skills - The teacher plans and prepares instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.

Principle 8: Assessment of Student Learning - The teacher understands, uses, and interprets formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and advance student performance and to determine program effectiveness.

Principle 9: Professional Commitment and Responsibility - The teacher is a reflective practitioner who demonstrates a commitment to professional standards and is continuously engaged in purposeful mastery of the art and science of teaching.

Principle 10: Partnerships - The teacher interacts in a professional, effective manner with colleagues, parents, and other members of the community to support students' learning and well-being.

There also exist Idaho Foundation Standards for Special Education Teachers. In addition to the Principles in the Idaho Core Teacher Standards listed above, special education teachers must meet increasingly specific and exacting standards for their own discipline beyond the Idaho Core Teacher Standards. Each standard has specific knowledge, dispositions and performance requirements. For a detailed list of these specific areas, please refer to the standards website at:

<http://www.sde.state.id.us/certification/>. The special education standards are:

- (1) Idaho Standards for Special Education Generalists,
- (2) Idaho Standards for Special Education Specialists,
- (3) Idaho Standards for Teachers of the Blind and Visually Impaired, and

(4) Idaho Standards for Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

The paraprofessional standards that were adopted in 2000 are monitored by ISDE teams during the regular monitoring cycle to determine whether the school district is evaluating paraprofessionals according to the standards and offering training as necessary to address identified needs.

New learning

Although an original intent within this goal was to meet with various special education stakeholder groups to develop standards, align professional preparation coursework, and move to a competency based training system, the ISDE found that by becoming partners in the overall standards movement and joining forces with Idaho's MOST, they had greater impact. This realization, early in the SIG, allowed the special education bureau to have a significant role in the development of these standards for special education and some influence on the requirements for general education.

Continued barriers

There has not been enough time to know whether the change to standards based classes has actually resulted in improved quality of teaching candidates. The process of documenting educational competence relative to the state standards is very labor intensive; documentation of standards and their direct effects takes time to assess. For those who have the option of providing documentation in a portfolio format or taking a class to demonstrate their competencies, the majority elect to take the class because it is

perceived as taking less time and energy. Candidates who come to Idaho with full credentials can have their recommendations from their original degree granting institutions accepted as fulfilling the requirements. The increased use of alternative credentialing (emergency, LOA's and contracts) points out the supply and demand issue of Idaho's shortage of motivated people entering and sticking with a career in special education.

Unanticipated benefits

Many activities came together about the same time. One thing that is very clear is that the SIG activities were responsible for ensuring that special education was always at the table in the discussions and that special education now has standards, certification requirements and professional development programs that are generally well aligned both internally and within the general scope of education in Idaho. The strides taken in Idaho's standards adoption and uniformity in alignment of course content aligned with these state standards can only have positive effects for students and their parents. The standards have multiple indicators that can be selected to demonstrate competence. This allows for some flexibility. As noted elsewhere in this report, the increased number of special education students graduating from High Schools and increasing numbers of these students meeting regular educational requirements is also suggests this positive trend.

Goal 4

Create a linked system of pre-service and in-service training to ensure parents and personnel are prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

The original need

Idaho institutions of higher education that provided training in the various disability areas focused most of their resources on needs of mildly disabled, elementary-age students. Although Idaho is a rural state with a vast need for generalists, the Idaho Department of Education planned to do more for secondary-level students with disabilities, especially related to transition and for younger children through early intervention.

Some Idaho universities required minimal disability-related training for general educators, while others required nothing. None of the programs required disability-related training for administrators. Consequently, the grant proposed a coordinated, enhanced system of training for general educators and administrators to better serve all children with disabilities. Further, an effort was considered to share specialists from various universities who had an expertise in autism, emotional disturbance, early intervention, transitions, etc.

Idaho lacked sufficient high quality in-service training. To remedy this situation the grant proposed to create a coordinated system whereby training needs were met by institutions of higher education. The intent was to directly address specific disability

areas and infuse disability issues into pre-service and in-service courses offered for general educators.

In June of 1997, the results of a statewide training needs assessment study were published. Sponsored by the Idaho Department of Education and conducted by Melinda Lindsey, Ph.D. of Boise State University, educators consistently and overwhelmingly expressed a need for more training in the following areas (in order of priority): behavior management, instructional strategies, alignment of special education needs with general education curriculum, attention deficit disorder, eligibility for special education, least restrictive environment, counseling students with disabilities, early childhood interventions, cross-cultural special education, assessment, etc.

The lack of adequate training was exacerbated due to school improvement plans that failed to adequately specify training needs. To achieve a high level of training, the Idaho Department of Education proposed (1) stronger partnerships between institutions of higher education and local education agencies concerning training needs, and (2) more affiliated faculty to be available to provide such training.

Needs from both parent and professional perspectives were initially identified. The topics listed in the ISDE needs assessment were prioritized as: Assessments, Assistive Technology (AT), Behavior, Collaboration and Teaming, Cultural Sensitivity Issues, Planning and delivery of Instruction, Legal matters, Transition and other Miscellaneous items. Results from the needs data indicated that the most frequently

listed topics of interest were regarding Instruction, Assessments, and Collaboration and Teaming. The “miscellaneous topics” category was followed by Behavior and Legal issues. Lowest ranking categories for topics of general importance to the respondents were Transition, Cultural issues and Assistive Technology. The ISDE responded to an IPUL request to modify their needs assessment and included a section that asked the age of the child with a disability and the primary disability category.

A summary list of the needs identified by parents for the last four years included: Strategies for addressing difficult behaviors, Summer activities (ESY) and less formal activities, Curriculum adaptation/modification/accommodation, Parent/School teaming – negotiating/advocacy skills, Participation in IEP meetings and, Stress/coping skills.

Training was provided in all areas of the state for both parents and professional staff. Evaluations from ISDE trainings were generally very positive. Training by IPUL was modified from a standardized, structured approach to one that was more responsive to the population making the request for training.

Overall, training needs have been identified and training has been provided in locations and formats that participants were able to find accessible. However, there has been some disconnect regarding exact preferences for training. Parents often preferred weekends; staff preferred weekdays. The data showed that parents do not generally attend ISDE trainings, but a number of LEA staff did attend trainings conducted by IPUL. It is not clear at this time whether convenience or some other factor is leading to

this differential attendance pattern. What is clear is that parents with disabled children are more focused on immediate solutions that are idiosyncratically connected to their own pressing issues rather than more globally affecting larger numbers of children.

Products and Procedures Developed

Through the monitoring and interview processes by districts, Idaho Parents UnLimited and the Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE), an extensive inventory of initial needs was developed. An ongoing method for collecting data is through the Idaho Training Clearinghouse (ITC) web site. The ITC web site posts new training that is available, coordinates attendance, collects immediate and post training data and provides the ISDE with the results. This process is ongoing and becoming institutionalized as *the* resource for professional development information in Idaho.

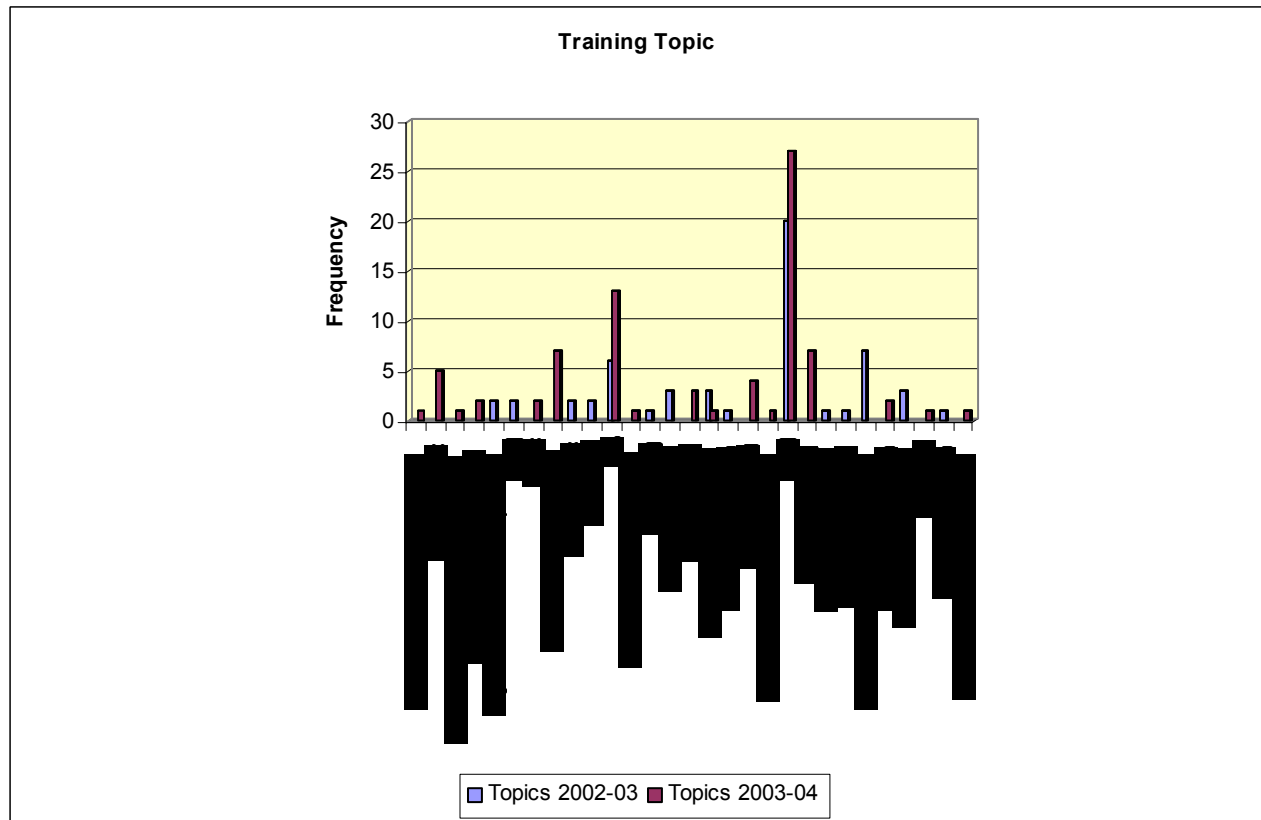
The Effect or Outcome

The creation of a linked system of pre-service and in-service training to ensure parents and personnel are prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities been substantially met. The Idaho Training Clearinghouse web based information site has united IHE professionals, school district teachers and staff, and parents via internet connectivity throughout all of Idaho. The ITC web site can be found at:

www.idahotc.com. Trainings have been collaboratively presented from 2001-04. The *Idaho Training Clearinghouse: 2004 Annual Training Evaluation Report* provides comprehensive information regarding the specific training offered and the results from the immediate and post training evaluations.

The Report indicates that evaluations have been primarily favorable. Parents, in significant numbers, attended trainings in topics related to the Results Based Model, Idaho's Alternate Assessment, early childhood transition, reading assistance and Medicaid issues in the schools. The training topics and locations have changed across

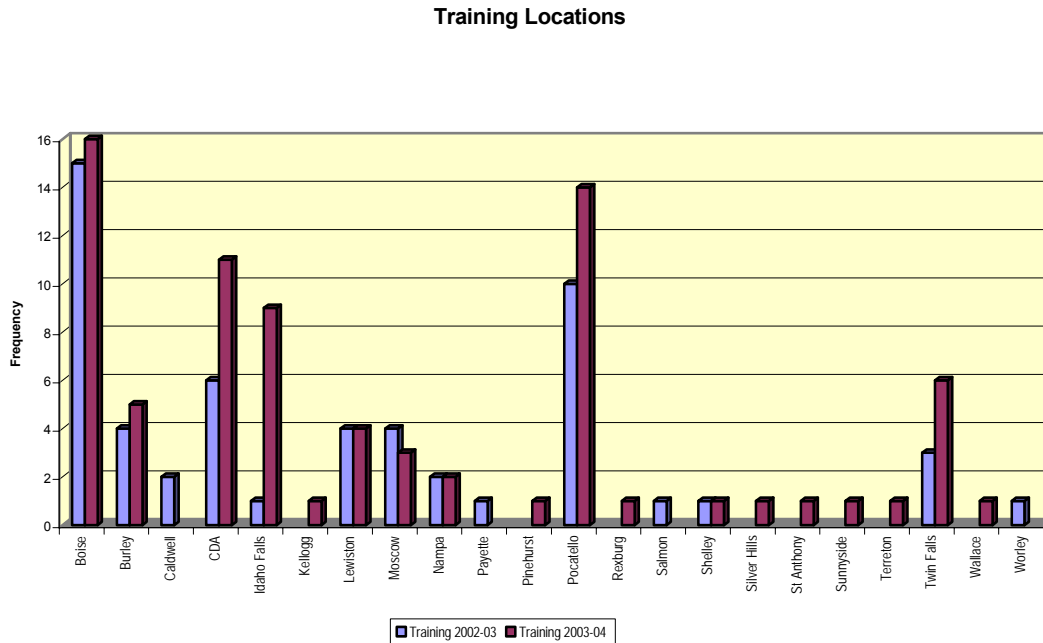
the years that data is available from the ITC. This information is displayed in the following charts. The first chart, Training Topic, demonstrates that a number of topics



were offered in 2003-04 that were not offered in 2002-03. Additionally, areas such as RBM received increased emphasis in the second 2003-04 year based upon expressed need from teachers, administrators and parents. As noted elsewhere, RBM is one area moving towards full-scale implementation.

Training locations also responded to the needs throughout the state. Boise, Pocatello, Coeur d'Alene, Burley, Lewiston, Moscow and Twin Falls had numerous training opportunities in both training cycles. Some areas, such as Caldwell had training in 2002-03, but not in 2003-04, while many others did not have training provided in their area initially, but did in the 2003-04 cycle. Idaho Falls had a dramatic increase in the number of trainings offered in 2003-04. It is noteworthy that the total

number of training opportunities increased from 55 in the 2002-03 training cycle to 79 in the training 2003-04 cycle. The chart below depicts the Training Locations.



The creation, adoption and implementation of the state educational standards was an enormous task. Teachers needed to be educated and trained, coached and mentored into the uses and implications of the standards being integrated into the curriculum. Parents needed to also be informed, staff needed to make adjustments to new and in some instances greater demands for performance and accountability. There can be no doubt that the outcomes of all these major reform efforts will be “different” than what has happened in the past. Moving to a results based model, examining children’s progress and or lack of progress to improve the learning of each student is the ideal state we wish to achieve. With schools now moving toward uniformly

collecting achievement data for each child, systematically tying and evaluating teacher success ratios to student learning, and increasing parent advocacy and involvement in the learning process, outcomes are predicted to be more positive for all children.

New Learning

The establishment of a statewide, central location for linking training has had a positive effect. Communication about training offerings and results are enhanced by the web-based ITC system. Even populations in rural areas generally have some access to internet connectivity. The comprehensive nature of the clearinghouse function addresses multiple needs in preparing and delivering training to parents, teachers and administrators.

Going To Scale

Linking pre- and inservice needs has been addressed by the ITC web site that takes this information to a massive scale. Now that the system really exists, the “built it and they will come” outcomes need to be carefully monitored to see what improvements or modifications need to be designed and implemented.

Continued Barriers

Even with the information available through the ITC web site, the rural nature of Idaho makes it difficult for some non-school personnel to attend trainings. Parents of children with disabilities still tend to focus on issues specific to the needs of their child

only and, with the exception of the Results Based Model (RBM), are not participating in statewide reform efforts.

Goal 5

Ensure adequate numbers of qualified personnel are available to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities.

The original need

The Certification Section of the Idaho Department of Education annually publishes a report entitled, Educator Supply and Demand in Idaho that lists the status of 28 educational positions. There were 1459.49 full time equivalent positions filled by 1716 employed personnel and 112 who were contracted to serve children and youth with disabilities for the 1996-1997 year.

All vacancies in special education positions were eventually filled for the 1996-1997 year; however, persons who were not fully certificated filled some of them. The number of special education personnel employed under a temporary approval was as follows: Early Childhood Special Education Teacher, 9; Special Education Teacher, K-12 Generalist, 20; Speech/Language Therapist, 11; and School Psychologist, 2.

The 1998 report also listed the 10 most difficult positions to fill in Idaho. The following special education positions were in that group: Special education teacher K-12 (ranked 2nd); School Counselor (ranked 3rd), Speech and Language Pathologist (ranked 4th); School Psychologist (ranked 5th); and Early Childhood Special Education Teacher (ranked 7th).

According to Educator Supply and Demand in Idaho, the statewide average for the number of qualified applicants that applied for all educational positions in Idaho for the 1997-1998 year was 6.5. The number of qualified persons that applied for special education positions was significantly lower: Special Education Teacher, K-12 Generalist, 2.6; Speech and Language Pathologist, 2.8; School Psychologist, 1.8; and Early Childhood Special Education Teacher, 2.7. Included in these figures were those persons who are already employed in Idaho, but who were considering a change in position.

Due to the low numbers of qualified applicants per position, some districts were in the unfavorable situation of hiring the only person who applied for an opening. To prevent inadequate staffing, Idaho proposed to attract more qualified candidates to special education positions by increasing the number of potential applicants graduating from in-state or out-of-state universities.

The Idaho Department of Education's report on educational staffing (June 1998) provided the projected number of individuals anticipated to graduate from all Idaho institutions of higher education with a special

The average number of vacancies occurring per year over the past four years in some special education and related service areas and the projected number of graduates from Idaho Institutions of Higher Education			
Position	Average number of vacancies	Number of 1998 graduates	Projected number of graduates for 1999
Special Education Teacher	163	62	74
Early Childhood Special Education Teacher	38	29	33
Speech and Language Pathologist	27	20	15
School Social Worker	8	1	1
School Psychologist	15	22	22

education degree or a related service degree. As the table below indicates, the Idaho

institutions of higher education prepared only a fraction of the personnel that were needed to fill the vacancies in these fields. Anecdotally, many of these graduates did not apply for positions in Idaho, but went to neighboring states where the salaries were higher.

However, data also indicated that increasing the numbers of new graduates prepared to work in special education might not be the best source for qualified candidates to fill vacancies. Approximately 50% of the persons filling new positions came from what is referred to as the “reserve pool.” This reserve pool consisted of delayed entrants (who do not enter the field upon graduation), reentering experienced teachers, and persons who leave private schools for public education. Attrition continued as a major factor in causing shortage problems, thus Idaho might redesign strategies to focus on the retention of qualified professionals in special education.

The number of vacancies occurring each year in special education positions was significantly higher than the rate of vacancies occurring in positions for general education teachers. Average vacancy rates for the four years prior to the grant for general educators versus select special education positions is as follows: Elementary Teacher 8%; Secondary Teacher 12%; Special Education Teacher K-12 Generalist 16%; Speech and Language Pathologist 19% and School Psychologist 14%.

Idaho has not kept data on the number of minority membership staff or those who have a disability serving in the area of special education. The data indicated that

while the total student population of Idaho was 12% minority, less than 2% of all educators in Idaho were of a minority group. Without a data collection system that would enable the state to report on the numbers of persons with a disability and/or minorities who provide special education and related services, Idaho cannot set goals and strategies in this area.

Partners and others involved

In April of 1998, guided by research on best practices in retention of qualified staff, a subcommittee of the Special Education Advisory Panel, other stakeholders, and Idaho Department of Education staff developed Idaho's first five year Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Strategic Plan. Included in this plan were strategies for addressing such critical issues as increasing staff salaries; improving administrative support; reducing time spent on paperwork and in meetings; promoting induction programs for first year teachers; supporting continuing education opportunities; and recognizing/rewarding outstanding special educators, etc.

Products and procedures developed

To address the shortage, the ISDE initiated a SIG scholarship program to be used by the IHEs that was designed to increase the number of individuals who enter into all levels of special education training with an emphasis on individuals with disabilities, native speakers of key languages spoken in the state, and individuals of color. Funding was also provided for graduate assistantships to develop standards-aligned

coursework, co teaching and introducing ideas on accommodations and adaptations for use at the college level.

The effect or outcomes

The report, Educator Supply and Demand in Idaho: 2003-2004 contains details regarding the identification, certification, and placement of certificated personnel. These outcomes are extracted from that report as well as information from the Idaho State Board of Education and degree granting institutions in Idaho.

Data in the report show that one half of the states need for special education staff can be filled with in-state personnel. Additionally, less than 10% of new personnel are entering the systems through alternate certification routes. On average, 25% of the special education teachers needed come from out of state. Reports from the two IHEs that responded to the ISDE information collection effort do not support the concept of providing financial incentives to encourage the populations identified above to enter the special education teaching profession. The data in the reports suggests that the SIG graduate assistant program originally provided support to students who would probably have entered the special education graduate program with or without the support (traditional students) and that the overall numbers of students in the process has not increased.

One university proposed a summer program to take a cohort of teachers on Letters of Authorization (LOA) through to certification over four summers. The

program started with 14 students and the university representative predicts that only six will ultimately achieve certification.

The SIG scholarship program has resulted in enrollment of more students from ethnically diverse backgrounds and students with disabilities. However, only one student with a disability, and two culturally different students remained in the program as of the report date. The university estimated that based on current performance, only the student with disabilities would certify at the end of this summer. The two students with culturally different backgrounds were not maintaining necessary levels of course work for completion.

To date, the scholarship program has not resulted in more students graduating from the program because the scholarships are not offering programs that ultimately result in graduation, but rather are offering certification programs only. Since all of the recipients of the graduate assistantships were admitted students or students in the process of gaining admission, there is nothing to support the notion that they would not have entered without the scholarships.

Reports from another university indicate that since the inception of the scholarships, 19 students have received support toward earning their certification as a K-12 special education teacher. Of those 19, only one is a person of color. In addition, 9 students have earned or are earning degrees in Educational Psychology. This may not indicate that the scholarship has definitively increased the number of students in the

program, since the overall numbers in the special education certification area are down from two years prior.

The ISDE has initiated the use of this scholarship incentive program and made adjustments to address perceived needs at the various IHEs, yet there has been little, if any increase in the numbers of students enrolling, and completing, the teacher certification process due to the scholarships.

Local school districts reported that 9,216 applications were received during the 2003-2004 school year to fill the 1,893 vacancies. This averages out to be 4.87 applications per certificated vacancy. This is considerably less than the 1997-98 average of 6.5 positions per vacancy.

Special education positions have even fewer applicants for available positions. The chart above lists six critical special education areas that have extremely low numbers of applicants per position. This average numbers of applicants are less than half of the statewide average numbers, illustrating the difficulty to fill open special education positions.

When viewing total number of applicants, it is important to take into consideration in-district transfers. Often districts will report a vacant position but will report only one applicant because they transfer someone from within their district to this position. Of the vacancies reported for 2003-2004, 292.0 were actually filled by shifting personnel from within the district. This is up from a previous high of 223.5

position shifts from last year. This number can be expected to grow as districts attempt to reduce staff due to economic shortfalls utilize transfers to handle downsizing through attrition as much as possible rather than through reduction-in-force policies.

Districts are asked to provide information on sources from which people have been hired to fill district vacancies. These sources are listed in five different categories.

The 1,892.5 vacancies for 2003-2004 were filled by:

1. Experienced Idaho educators (606);
2. Experienced out-of-state educators (269);
3. New Idaho educators (426);
4. New out-of-state educators (97.5) and,
5. Others, including:
 - a) In-district transfers (292);
 - b) Those with some form of alternative certification (119.5) and,
 - c) Positions that have been eliminated (82.5).

It is noteworthy that the first and second ranks provide more than double the supply of new Idaho educators.

Idaho's public schools reported the relative difficulty of filling certificated positions by ranking the difficulty they had in filling a position by using a scale of 1 to 5

with number 1 being "very hard" and number 5 being "very easy." Answers were collated based on the

Position	# of districts rating a #1 or a#2 (hard to fill or very hard to fill)	# of districts reporting a vacancy in this job area	percent rank
Early Child-Spec Ed	13	15	87%
Technology Ed	11	13	85%
Speech Pathologist	13	16	81%
Spec Ed Teacher	30	40	75%
ESL	13	18	72%

percentages of those job areas where at least ten (10) districts reported having a vacancy in that specific subject area and the number who reported that area as being hard/very

hard or easy/very easy to fill. As the chart above shows, special education appears in three of the top five most difficult to fill positions. The list of “hard to fill” positions doesn’t change much from year to year. Last year the top seven (7) hardest to fill positions were ranked as “hard” or “very hard” to fill by 75%-89% of the districts reporting. This year there are four (4) positions ranked that high. Early Childhood-Special Education ranked at 87%, Speech Pathologist ranked at 81%, and Special Education Teacher ranked at 75%.

Another	Number of Districts Reporting 3 or Fewer Applications for a Position					
indicator of	Music	17	School Nurse	9	Physical Science	6
	Spec Ed Teacher	15	School Psychologist	9	Family Consumer Science	5
	ESL	16	Speech/Lang Pathologist	9	Math	5
	Business Tech Ed	12	Standard Elementary	8	Principal	5
difficulty to fill					Standard Exceptional Child	
positions is the	Foreign Languages	12	Art	7	(Dir.)	4
	School Counselor	12	Technology Education	7	Ag Science	3
number of	Early Childhood-Spec Ed	11	Social Studies	7	Biological Science	3
	English	10	ESL	6	Reading	3
	Physical Ed/Health	9	Ed Media Generalist	6	Speech/Drama	3

applications for a given position. As can be seen in the above table, many districts

reported having fewer than three applications for almost all special education positions.

POSITIONS RATED MOST DIFFICULT TO FILL (2001-2004)			
Rank	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
1	Speech/Path	Music	Early Childhood-Spec Ed
2	Special Education	ESL	Tech Ed
3	Tech Ed	Early Childhood-Spec Ed	Speech/Path
4	Early Childhood-Spec Ed	Speech/Path	Special Education
5	Music	Special Ed	ESL
6	School Psych	Tech Ed	Music
7	Family/Cons Science	Foreign Lang	Foreign Lang

Trend data as indicated in the table above also shows that these special education positions have been among the most difficult to fill over time.

The population of Idaho's educators is growing older. The table below indicates that the percentage of Idaho's educators from ages 51 to 60 (and over) has increased about 5 percent over last year and about 38 percent since the 1998-99 survey. The 31 to 50 age group has decreased from 59.30 percent of the total teaching population in 1998-99 to 50.68 percent in 2002-2003. This is about a 17 percent drop. The 21 to 30 age group is down to 12.96 percent from the high of 14.47 percent in 1999-2000. These numbers indicate that ways need to be found to attract young teachers into the profession.

When staffing vacancies occur for which qualified applicants with appropriate credentialing cannot be found to fill them, there are alternative avenues that districts can use to

Age Group Distribution of Idaho's Educators (%)					
	1998-99	1999-00	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Ages 21-30	14.11	14.47	13.82	13.13	12.96
31-40	21.17	20.46	20.63	21.21	21.44
41-50	38.13	36.20	32.93	31.02	29.24
51-60	24.53	26.65	30.06	31.87	33.34
Over 60	2.06	2.22	2.56	2.77	3.02
Total %	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

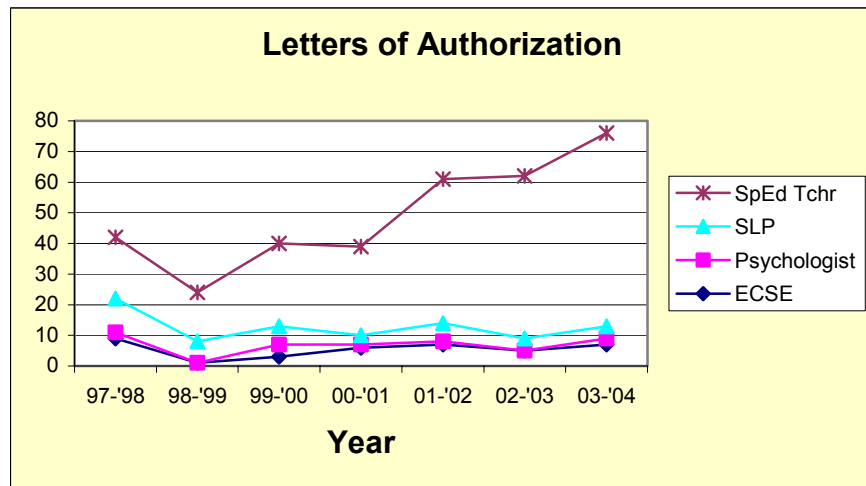
solve their hiring dilemmas. These alternatives are:

- Letters of Authorization
- Consultant Specialists
- Approved Mis-assignments

These alternatives to traditional certification allow districts to hire individuals who don't have appropriate certification if certain conditions can be met. Each of these options has its own set of requirements before it can be granted. Under specific circumstances they give districts the ability to solve difficult staffing problems.

Letters of Authorization provide one avenue for districts to hire individuals who do not have the appropriate certifications. Individuals who are being considered for a Letter of Authorization must at least hold bachelor's degree from an accredited university. Often these people already hold an education credential outside the area in which the district wants to assign them and they are often already working to fulfill the requirements necessary for the certification they are seeking. Requests for Letters of

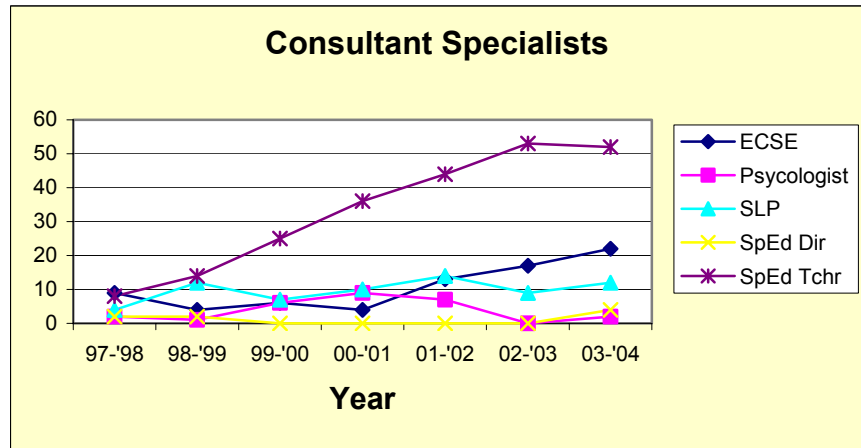
Authorization come from school districts and not the individuals. The Professional Standards Commission reviews



them, and, if deemed worthy, they are passed on to the Idaho State Board of Education with a recommendation for the Board's final approval. The number of requests for Letters of Authorization that have been approved for the last seven years is shown in the chart above.

The growth in the total number of Letters of Authorization from 1997 to 2004 can be attributed to two factors. One is the federal requirement for appropriate certification; another is the ISDE encouragement to utilize this method of alternative certification rather than the Consultant Specialist approval.

The Consultant Specialist approval allows Idaho school districts to request annual limited approval for persons to teach in areas in which the district deems them to be “highly and uniquely qualified.” While this provision places more of the decision-making responsibility regarding



who is qualified in the hands of the board of trustees of the local school district and remains as an option for districts to use, it is not intended to replace or circumvent the importance of traditional certification, nor is it intended to be a long-term hiring solution. The overall number of requests for Consultant Specialist approval grew steadily until 2003, and then dipped slightly. Special education positions remain among the most frequently requested consultant specialist positions.

At this time there is little progress on increasing qualified recruitment into areas of personnel deficit. Completion of other goals that tie directly to personnel issues (Goal 3 and Goal 4) may still produce improvement in this area.

New learning

Idaho enacted a rule in 2000 that required personnel on emergency certification to complete a program toward certification within three years. More recently the special

education bureau instituted changes in their monitoring practices to ensure that special education personnel were properly certified.

Continued barriers

Several factors have developed over the last couple of years that have the potential to impose a negative impact on Idaho's overall supply of teachers. Such things as increased costs, additional state and federal requirements for certification, public demand for more accountability, a slumping economy, and the growth of home schooling and "virtual" schools are just some of the issues that may provide barriers for young people wanting to become teachers and teachers who may want to come to Idaho from other states.

The negative economic climate has prevented the Idaho from raising teachers' salaries to a level that would make them more competitive with neighboring states. It has also caused colleges and universities to raise student fees in order to maintain a quality program for preparing teachers (and other professions). Increased costs for documentation and increased preparation, and the rise in certification fees are all additional expenses that weren't incurred by prospective teachers as recently as two years ago.

The ISDE conducted a survey to determine why teachers in special education left to take general education teaching jobs. From seventy-five teachers from across the state that participated in the survey, the top two determining issues cited by teachers who

left special education were (1) amount of paperwork and (2) size of caseload. In the most recent year caseload size for special education teachers increased from 25 to 26 students per teacher as many districts eliminated positions.

The new federal requirements found in the “No Child Left Behind” legislation will require many teachers to take additional course work in order to obtain and/or maintain their teaching certificates. The State of Idaho is looking at the whole arena of teacher certification including a tiered-certification system, revamping the requirements for certificate renewals, and alternative forms of certification. Despite scholarships funded by the State Improvement Grant that have been awarded to 200 students over the past three years to encourage the pursuit of a degree in special education fewer Idaho graduates took a degree in special education.

All of these factors have developed within the last few years. While each factor by itself may not deter anyone from wanting to become a teacher or from wanting to come to Idaho to teach, taken as a group of circumstances, they may create an atmosphere that is less than inviting. When viewed through the perspective of the potential loss of many existing teachers who will be retiring, it does present some warning signs about possible teacher shortages for which educators and policy makers need to be alert.

Unanticipated benefits

Seven Idaho colleges and universities now provide approved teacher preparation programs. Graduates from these institutions ultimately make up a significant portion of the certified educators working in the State of Idaho. There is a projected overall increase in the projected number of Idaho graduates who will be seeking careers in the education field due to the finalization of the program approval for Brigham Young University – Idaho. Their graduates from the College of Education will now be able to obtain an Idaho teaching certificate, and they are projecting that 681 students will graduate with education degrees between 2004 and 2007. The addition of BYU-Idaho's graduates and the rise in the number of positions that were eliminated will produce good news for school districts because of the growth of the over-all talent pool; however, it is unknown how many of these will go on to pursue special education certification.

Goal 6

Effectively administer, systematically evaluate, and continuously improve the project through a partnership among the Idaho Department of Education, local education agencies, Idaho Parents Unlimited and institutions of higher education.

Final findings

Almost all of the SIG activities have been completed. Several activities needed modification after initial SIG funding. The changes in the SIG activities have created the need for additional staff time for management and data collection. All activities throughout the SIG were coordinated from one ISDE staff member as adjunct to other duties and one full time administrative assistant. Although there was a management plan, meetings of committees and key personnel were occasional and infrequent. The timeline and management plan required constant modification as SIG activities were accomplished or found to be unworkable. The enormous volume of activities attempted in this SIG, relative to the staff time that could be devoted to them, may have been overly ambitious. The activities are listed in Appendix A, Table 1. The staff members assigned to coordinate the SIG worked activities and meetings into other schedules without an original work plan to guide them.

There was a detailed assessment plan developed in July of 2000 that proposed to collect data on each objective and activity. The original external evaluator, in conjunction with ISDE staff and advisory committee members developed the

assessment plan. Unfortunately, the evaluator was unable to initiate the evaluation activities and after the first year of implementation.

Partners and others involved

The ISDE successfully partnered with local education agencies, Idaho Parents Unlimited, institutions of higher education and the State Board of Education to implement the various activities in the grant.

The effect or outcomes

In spite of the fragmented time that was devoted to management of the SIG, the ISDE staff responsible was able to manage the myriad activities and contracts. The infrequent meetings had coherence and enabled the ISDE to succeed in the implementation relating to almost all goals.

Management of the grant resulted in implementation of state and local policies and procedures that strengthen the capacity of schools to improve educational results for all students. The activities included development of recommendations for the fair application of standards to students with disabilities. In addition, the ISDE published recommendations from their Achievement Standards and Assessment Task Force and included key information in the Idaho Implementation Manual. The ISDE and partners formed six technical assistance teams to help LEAs implement new standards with each team having a unique focus.

Other activities that were effectively managed include:

- Statewide training on, and implementation of, the Idaho Alternate Assessment.
- Instituting a data system to track and report on all PGIs.
- Continued completion of a five-year post secondary exit survey for students with disabilities.
- Completion of a table that matches LEAs with homogeneous characteristics in order to establish a more valid comparison of expected PGI outcomes.
- Using a continuous improvement tiered monitoring process.
- Hiring a consultant to coordinate all of the recruitment, training, technical support and evaluation of the results based model.
- Developing and posting training modules to the training clearinghouse site.

Management of the second goal, building the capacity of parents to influence reform and increase their children's educational achievements was completed primarily through various contracts with Idaho Parents Unlimited, Inc. (IPUL). Through these contracts IPUL was able to increase work hours for the project director, regional coordinators and secretarial time. In addition, IPUL has provided parental participation on state committees engaged in SIG activities and:

- Continued to provide information to parents on issues of school reform through its newsletter, distribution of briefs on a number of topics, workshops, and its annual conference.
- Collected data related to its outcome measures for SIG related activities.
- IPUL awarded stipends to parents.
- Conducted workshops and presentations.

The revision of professional and paraprofessional standards, certification requirements and personnel development programs was achieved early in the SIG process. Through cooperative activities among the various partners, the ISDE managed to ensure that special education standards were put into policy. Teacher standards,

paraprofessional standards, administrator standards and standards for counselors and school psychologists can be viewed at www.sde.state.id.us/MOST/CertStandards.html.

In addition, the ISDE awarded each of the four State IHEs that offer a baccalaureate program in special education, funding to support the alignment of pre-service training with the new standards for professionals. The ISDE provided funding to support the development of curriculum for an associate degree program for paraprofessionals and contracted for purchase of paraprofessional curriculum distributed to all LEAs on compact disk.

Effective management of the creation of a linked system of pre-service and in-service training to ensure parents and personnel are prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities has resulted in a project that has gone to scale. The contracts with the Idaho Training Clearinghouse have resulted in the development of many training modules, some that were offered jointly by ISDE regional consultants and IPUL staff to parents and school personnel statewide.

In addition, enhancements to the training clearinghouse site such included:

- “Just in Time” trainings.
- Searchable data base of trainings.
- The ability for trainers to up load training materials on the site.
- Interactive feature for trainers to respond to questions from trainees.
- Increased speed for loading site.

Additional services were also developed as part of the contracts including data collection and evaluation of training, trainer’s manual for those delivering training and

a help manual with email and phone technical support for personnel and parents using the site.

Many attempts were made to ensure adequate numbers of qualified personnel were available to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities, however despite effective management of multiple sub-grants, scholarships and stipends, this goal remains unrealized. At this time there is little progress on increasing qualified recruitment into areas of personnel deficit. The issue may be broader than can be addressed by the special population services bureau alone. There was, however, improvement in data collection to provide an on going projection of supply and demand for all teaching positions, not just special education, as a result of this goals' focus.

The ISDE staff responsible to manage the myriad activities and contracts of the SIG maintained contact with personnel and programs responsible for collecting and providing data for the evaluation activity. In spite of the fragmented time that was devoted to management of the SIG, the extra monitoring effort enabled the ISDE to effectively administer, systematically evaluate, and continuously improve the project through a partnership among the Idaho Department of Education, local education agencies, Idaho Parents Unlimited and institutions of higher education.

All contracts with project partners outlined the timelines for services and reports. At the time the SIG was written, the ISDE did not have the capacity to analyze data. The

ISDE developed several data collection procedures and refined them over time. One example was the development of a project tracking system that provided courtesy reminders to project partners of project reports that were coming due. This procedural adjustment allowed the ISDE staff responsible for the SIG to provide progress reports at Special Education Advisory Panel meetings and to provide input into annual performance reports.

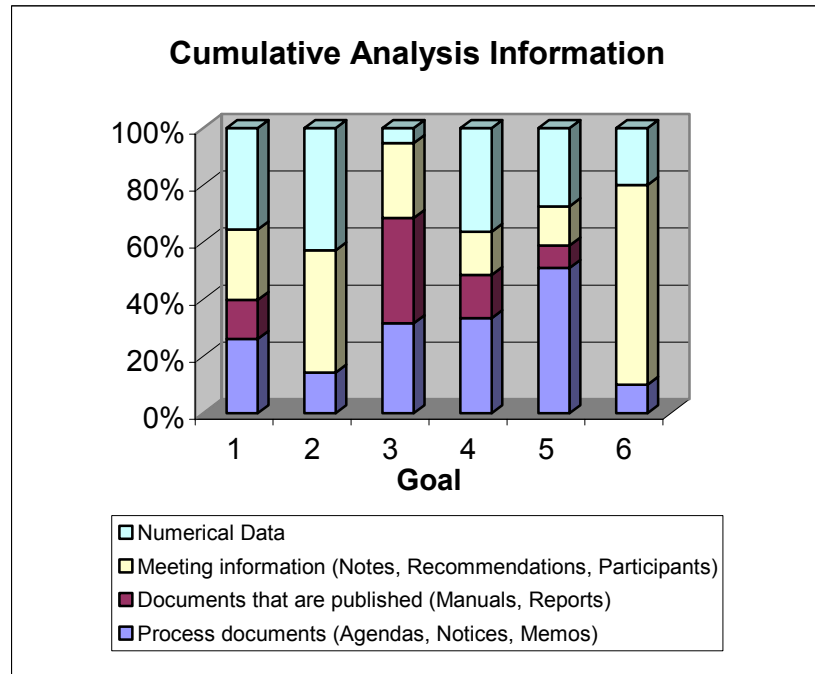
Going to scale

As mentioned under each specific goal, two areas have been taken to scale as a result of the SIG. The Idaho Training Clearinghouse web site coordinates most of Idaho's training effort, provides information for potential participants and analyzes post training survey data. It is likely that the use of this methodology will continue to expand and continued monitoring will help determine what improvements or modifications need to be designed and implemented.

The Results-Based Model (RBM) that attempts to integrate research-based components relating to family involvement, teaming and collaboration, functional assessment, outcome-oriented intervention, and data based decision-making has also demonstrated success. Based upon the data, the ISDE has begun to implement RBM in over 140 schools and will take the model to full scale during the next few years.

Continued barriers

The ISDE has made dramatic improvement in the collection and use of data for decision making and specific report generation, however the availability of more



comprehensive data sets remained a problem. In some areas of the evaluation, there was considerable difficulty obtaining data in formats that could be used for analysis. It was found that some reports that purported to contain the same data had different information in them when reported again in subsequent years. In other instances, data was available only in summary form; the raw collection had been over-written or was otherwise not available. The chart above shows the sources of information and their percentages that were used for the final SIG analysis.

Contact with the technology office of the ISDE ultimately yielded data regarding student outcome data that was useful for secondary analysis and that could be presented in this evaluation. Data that is consistently obtained will be a priority consideration for future grant competitions.

Results Based Model Supplementary Information

As noted under Goal 1, a response to intervention model, Idaho's Results Based Model (RBM), has shown promise as an early intervention, training, and systemic change mechanism.

Response to Intervention is an alternative to the traditional special education model where schools must wait for students to fail before providing significant intervention. In this alternative, schools do not wait for formal identification of a learning disability, but instead start providing targeted interventions to students early. In this "responsiveness to intervention" model (RtI), monitoring how the student responds to those interventions becomes a part of the special education identification process itself.

For any given student, RtI might look like this: Having noticed a student's early difficulties in reading, his teacher monitors the student's efforts and provides focused support through daily small-group work. If this support does not seem to help, the teacher enlists the school reading specialist to work with the student as well, one-on-one. Throughout a few months of these interventions, the teacher also conducts regular assessments and documents the student's limited progress. She also notes the child's increasing discouragement.

When these interventions seem to yield no consistent or substantial gains for the student, his teacher requests a meeting of a Student or Child Study Team. There she

presents her concerns about the student's reading and an overview of the interventions conducted, along with supporting documentation, including samples of the student's work and the results of multiple classroom reading assessments. The team agrees that because the student has not responded in a reasonable amount of time to appropriate interventions, he has a specific learning disability and so needs additional support through special education.

Even before formally classifying students as having learning disabilities, those who need more assistance receive additional and progressively more intensive interventions. With this solid system in place in the general education classroom, a teacher is able to quickly identify students who need still more help. In addition, for some students, the early support may make special education eligibility unnecessary. RtI is really about good teaching; it is as much a prevention model as an identification model.

Idaho has created and implemented the Results Based Model as its own form of response to intervention and collected data on its effectiveness.

The data gathered and analyzed in this report is extracted and synthesized from the *RBM Summary Evaluation* and the *RBM Final Report*. The data provides strong evidence for the following statements regarding the impact of RBM implementation in schools surveyed. The RBM components include:

Parental Involvement (PI)

The RBM model supports parental involvement and believes that the degree to which parents are positively involved in planning for their children has a vital bearing upon the likelihood that interventions will prove effective. Specifically, RBM measures whether parents are active participants on problem solving teams, whether parents feel encouraged to say what they think, and whether the team implements parents' intervention ideas.

Problem Solving Teams and Collaboration (PSTC)

Teams coordinate the ongoing process of identifying concerns, developing interventions, and determining the results of interventions. Therefore, the model proposes that problem-solving teams are critical elements in extending intellectual resources used to find solutions to complex learning and adjustment concerns in schools. RBM monitors whether problems are defined clearly and objectively in team meetings, everyone at team meetings participate in a meaningful way, and whether the team uses, the IDEAL problem-solving approach.

Functional Assessment (FA)

Functional assessment is designed to develop and evaluate interventions complementary to the problem solving approach by determining discrete areas in which intervention may be usefully applied. These assessments look at conditions and

settings affecting the problem and use measures sensitive to change to assess the intervention outcomes.

Outcome Oriented Interventions (OOI)

A primary focus of RBM is the development of specific goals (outcomes) relative to interventions that are explored. Intervention and outcomes are complementary of each other. Educators may perform a critical role in this regard through the application of intervention skills, and assisting others in evaluating intervention adherence and integrity. These interventions work to increase the academic performance of students, specifically in the skill areas of computation, fluency, spelling, writing, etc.

Data-Based Decision-Making (DBDM)

Data provides a mechanism to allow decisions to be made regarding modifications of interventions as well as information regarding efforts at reintegration of students into less restrictive settings. Without this information, team decision makers' ability to make credible judgments regarding the continuance or termination of intervention efforts is compromised. Using data in a sensitive, dynamic way empowers parents and educators with the advantage of capturing valuable time by knowing what is "working" and what is not. Using data to inform decisions in this way requires that baseline data is always collected before interventions are started, case managers review progress weekly, and that students show measurable progress on their I-Plans.

Teacher Efficacy for Learning and Success (TELS)

“Teachers’ beliefs in their efficacy affect their general orientation toward the educational process as well as their specific instructional activities”. Teacher Efficacy may be seen as both a result and as a mediator of implementing innovations within the educational context. As a result, efficacy is affected by the support and efficiency by which the innovation is experienced. Measures of teacher efficacy examine whether teachers are skilled in various methods of teaching; whether teachers really believe every child can learn. If teachers will try another instructional method when a child doesn’t learn something the first time.

Results from Implementation of the Results Based Model

RBM Best Practices Effects

- (1) RBM Pilot Schools report increasingly more skilled and refined use and appreciation of best practices as they continue to implement the approach. This is consistently evidenced by data regarding problem solving, teaming and collaboration, functional assessment, outcome-oriented interventions, data based decision-making, and their collective perception of positive effects upon learning and success of students.
- (2) The use of RBM is shown to be positively associated with increased levels of teacher efficacy regarding their ability to effect positive learning outcomes with students. This, in turn, is associated with increased evaluations of their parental

involvement, use of functional assessment, data based decision-making, and overall evaluation of RBM effectiveness.

(3) There is strong evidence that, as level of involvement increases with respect to participation in RBM, there is a robust and consistent association with increasing Parental Involvement, Problem-solving and Team Collaboration, Functional Assessment, and overall increase in evaluation of RBM's impact/effects in the school.

(4) The evaluation data firmly supports the finding that, as RBM Pilot Sites increase their extent of implementation from mechanical to routine and refined forms, there is an associated strong and consistent increase in positive evaluation of RBM Best Practices across all measures studied.

Administrators' Evaluation of RBM Effects

(1) Administrators indicated that, over 80% of the time, "best practices", (i.e. problem solving, functional assessment, data-based decision-making, which are a foundation for RBM implementation), were implemented as provided in their training.

(2) Administrators indicated that in 75% of the cases, they were currently implementing Intervention Plans (I-Plans) that utilized the IDEAL problem solving approach as a systematic approach to implementing interventions.

(3) Administrators' responses indicated that RBM Core Training provided by the State Improvement Grant was ranked as the greatest help to implementing RBM in their schools, followed by leadership of the school administration.

(4) Administrators indicate a pronounced improvement in making better use of available resources and utilizing previously "untapped" resources to help teachers and students. (9) 88% of Administrators report that student academic performances have improved, and, furthermore, that 81% indicate that behavior issues have also improved since the implementation of RBM.

(5) Administrators strongly support the view that the RBM process is having the effect of better identifying needs of students, which results in better interventions than before.

(6) 93% of Administrators said that RBM is "excellent" or "better than most approaches" they have seen in helping students and teachers address learning concerns.

(7) 100% of Administrators indicated that Students, Parents, Administrators, General Education, and Special Education were either satisfied or very satisfied with RBM implementation in their schools.

Effects on Reading Acquisition Rates

(1) Interventions utilizing the RBM Intervention Plan demonstrated powerful effects upon indicators of reading progress resulting in reading fluency

Acquisition Rates significantly outperforming general education norms for

Acquisition Rates of non-intervention readers on the same measures.

(2) Comparing the average Effect Size of the RBM Intervention students in Grades 1-5 with non-intervention students reveals an average Acquisition Rate performance of 2.46 standard deviations that is at or above the 94th percentile relative to the mean of the general education comparison.

Placement Rates in Pilot Schools

(1) While there has been an average increase of 6% in placement rates in schools across Idaho in the last three years, there has been a corresponding average reduction in placements into special education of 26% in RBM Pilot Schools.

(2) This outcome data indicates that RBM has had a powerful effect of expanding general education interventions and reducing special education placements.

Evaluation of RBM Core Training

(1) RBM Core Training has been very effective in promoting the skills and knowledge to implement this approach in schools. Year 2001-2002 data indicates an average competency of 89% on the Core Assessment Survey that is consistent with similar levels of performance assessed over the last three years of implementation.

Going to scale

The State of Idaho, Bureau of Special Education, has been piloting the Results-Based Model (RBM) as a research-based, best-practices problem solving approach to support learning and success for students experiencing academic or behavioral concerns during the last four years. RBM attempts to integrate research-based components relating to family involvement, teaming and collaboration, functional assessment, outcome-oriented intervention, and data based decision-making to improve results for students with significant academic and behavioral concerns. As such, RBM is an approach well grounded in theory, research, and practice. Based upon the data, the ISDE has begun to implement RBM in over 140 schools and will take the model to full scale during the next few years.

Appendix A

Table 1.
Detailed Implementation Plan

Goal 1: Implement state and local policies and procedures that strengthen the capacity of schools to improve educational results for all students, including students with disabilities.

Objective 1.1: Influence the implementation of achievement standards to ensure that all students receive benefit.

Activity A: Identify and support individuals with disabilities, parents of students with disabilities, special education directors, special education teachers and others who are willing to participate on state standards development committees.

Activity B: Develop and adopt state standards for grades 9-12.

Activity C: Develop and adopt state standards for grades K-8.

Activity D: During the 2000-2001 school year, convene a task force of stakeholders to plan and recommend strategies for the implementation of new state achievement standards.

Objective 1.2: Ensure that 100% of students with disabilities participate in Idaho's current and future statewide assessment program.

Activity A: Identify a representative group of individuals who are knowledgeable about students with disabilities and about best practices in assessment to participate on a state assessment development team.

Activity B: Develop and implement an alternate assessment for Idaho's current statewide testing program.

Activity C: Establish clear guidelines and provide training on the participation of students with disabilities in statewide testing and on the use of alternate assessments.

Activity D: Develop and implement accommodation guidelines and alternate assessments for future standards-based statewide assessments as needed.

Objective 1.3: Assess progress toward State Performance Goals and Indicators for students with disabilities by improving data systems at the level of the Idaho Department of Education, the local education agency and the individual school, to yield reliable and valid data that can be compared over time for each performance indicator.

Activity A: Refine the current methods of data collection at the state level to reflect the needs of the Idaho Department of Education, local education agencies and individual schools in order to (1) evaluate school reform results for all students and (2) measure progress toward State Performance Goals and Indicators for students with disabilities.

Activity B: Support local education agencies at the district and school level to use data to develop and adjust school improvement efforts and thereby benefit all students, including students with disabilities.

Objective 1.4: Revise and implement a special education performance based accountability framework that combines strategic planning, standards and data-based decision making.

Activity A: Convene an Accountability Framework Task Force to design a collaborative monitoring system, which incorporates an analysis of districts' progress toward meeting the State's performance goals and indicators as well as procedural compliance with the IDEA.

	Activity B: Develop monitoring tools (parent surveys, interview protocols, checklists) that will support implementation of the new accountability framework.
	Activity C: Identify individual roles, and train and support a cadre of partners (parents, special education personnel, and school administrators) to assist with accountability reviews.
	Activity D: Begin implementation of the newly designed accountability framework during the 1999-2000 school year.
Objective 1.5:	<u>Improve results for all students, including students with disabilities, by 1) implementing a Results-Based Model for delivering services to students with intensive educational needs in 35 schools, and, 2) building the capacity of other schools to implement components of the Results-Based Model, as measured by annual gains of at least 1% on statewide assessments.</u>
	Activity A: Provide information to parents and school district personnel that includes an overview of the Results-Based Model and systems change activities annually.
	Activity B: Assist interested school task forces with completing comprehensive evaluations of their current school improvement plans as they relate to components of the Results-Based Model.
	Activity C: Offer interested schools assistance with developing proposals to become Results-Based Model pilot schools.
	Activity D: Develop and use objective criteria to select 10 schools per year that are most likely to be successful pilot sites during project years 1, 3, 4, and 5.
	Activity E: Award subgrants and assign school improvement consultants for three years to assist pilot schools in implementing the Results-Based Model.
	Activity F: After three years of implementing the Results-Based Model, provide schools with mentoring subgrants to assist other pilot schools in becoming Results-Based schools.
	Activity G: Plan statewide technical assistance activities around the key components of the Results-Based Model in order to build the capacity for more schools in Idaho to adopt this model.
Goal 2: Enhance the capacity of parents, especially parents of students with disabilities, to effectively participate in and influence school reform activities and their children's educational progress.	
Objective 2.1:	<u>Increase the capacity of Idaho Parents Unlimited to provide information and training to parents of students with disabilities, which enable them to be active participants in their children's educational progress by doubling parent education coordinator/consultant hours and increasing information, training, and support to parents.</u>
	Activity A: Idaho Parents Unlimited will increase the work hours of its regional coordinators and project coordinator to provide comprehensive education and training to parents of children with disabilities and to assist in the implementation of the goals of the Improving Results Initiative.
	Activity B: Idaho Parents Unlimited will increase its ability to provide information and support to parents who are native speakers of key languages (other than English) present in Idaho communities.
	Activity C: Idaho Parents Unlimited will revise and develop additional information and resources in standard and alternate formats (newsletters, Internet, training, large print, Braille, computer disk, etc.) that are sensitive to language, culture and disability.
	Activity D: Idaho Parents Unlimited will provide stipends to parents that will enable them to participate in training and technical assistance events.

Objective 2.2: Increase the capacity of all parents, including parents of students with disabilities, to promote school reform efforts in their home communities, resulting in a greater number of actively involved parents.

Activity A: Establish a statewide Parent Coalition for School Reform comprised of representatives from Idaho Parents Unlimited, Parent Teacher Association, Hispanic Council, Migrant Council and others to identify a common vision and role for parents as they participate in school reform efforts.

Activity B: Facilitate efforts of the Parent Coalition for School Reform to identify supports that parents need to actively participate in state and local school reform activities related to the development and implementation of content standards, student assessments and school improvement plans.

Activity C: Facilitate efforts of the Parent Coalition for School Reform to coordinate activities of members at the state and local levels to ensure parents possess the information, training and opportunities necessary to participate in school reform efforts.

Objective 2.3: Provide comprehensive education and training in general and special education practices, for parents of children with disabilities, to develop their knowledge and skills so that they may fully participate in their children's educational progress resulting in greater educational achievement by their children.

Activity A: Develop parent education and training that reflect the content and delivery format identified in statewide needs assessments completed by Idaho Parents Unlimited and the Idaho Department of Education.

Activity B: Provide education, training and supports in delivery formats (time, place, delivery method) that meet the needs of parents.

Activity C: Evaluate the education and training provided to parents and make adjustments based on their input.

Goal 3: Revise professional and paraprofessional standards, certification requirements and personnel development programs for the purpose of redefining personnel skills necessary to improve results for children and youth with disabilities.

Objective 3.1: Develop consensus among project partners to establish Idaho's Special Education Career Lattice that includes general and special education instruction, administration, and related services which will support a greater number of trained individuals to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Activity A: Convene a Career Lattice Committee comprised of representatives of institutions of higher education, the Idaho Department of Education, local education agencies, parents, Part C administrators and providers, and others.

Activity B: Identify and address gaps in all relevant disciplines to create a comprehensive career lattice for Idaho.

Activity C: Establish subcommittees (Instruction, Administration, Paraprofessional and Related Services) to revise or develop competency-based standards and training curricula for relevant disciplines.

Activity D: Coordinate and maintain oversight of subcommittee work to ensure continuity across disciplines.

Objective 3.2: The Instruction Subcommittee will work in collaboration with the State Board of Education (Idaho's MOST) to adopt competency-based standards related to students with disabilities for general education teachers and for special education aides, assistants, teachers and consulting teachers.

Activity A: Develop Entry Level Teacher Standards for general education teacher certification and seek adoption of the standards.

Activity B: Develop Entry Level Teacher Standards for Idaho pre-K through 12 Special Education Teacher certification and endorsements and seek adoption of the standards.

Activity C:	Create a Paraeducator Work Group to develop and seek adoption for standards and training curricula for instructional aides and assistants.
Objective 3.3:	<u>The Administration Subcommittee will work in collaboration with the State Board of Education (Idaho's MOST) to adopt standards related to students with disabilities for school principals and for supervisors and directors of special education.</u>
Activity A:	Develop and seek adoption of Entry Level Administrator Standards that recognize the expanded role of school principals in overseeing special education programs.
Activity B:	Develop and seek adoption of Entry Level Administrator Standards that recognize the changing role of special education supervisors and directors with respect to overseeing diverse special services programs.
Objective 3.4:	<u>The Related Services Subcommittee will work in collaboration with the State Board of Education (Idaho's MOST) to adopt standards and competencies related to students with disabilities for school counselors and psychologists, and for speech-language, occupational and physical therapy aides and assistants.</u>
Activity A:	In partnership with Idaho's MOST, develop and seek adoption of Entry Level Standards that support the changing role of school psychologists.
Activity B:	In partnership with Idaho's MOST, develop Entry Level Standards for school counselors with respect to special education programs.
Activity C:	In partnership with Idaho's MOST, review speech-language, occupational and physical therapy aide and assistant standards and curricula that are in place for Part C programs in Idaho; revise standards as needed to meet the needs of school-age students; and seek adoption of standards.
Activity D:	Create an Interpreter Work Group to develop initial standards for interpreters.
Objective 3.5:	<u>Revise or develop higher education training programs to deliver the content identified in new standards for paraprofessionals and professionals, resulting in a greater number of individuals receiving quality training.</u>
Activity A:	Provide subgrants to institutions of higher education to revise the content of pre-service training programs to reflect new standards for professional and leadership positions.
Activity B:	Develop requests for proposals or provide subgrants as appropriate to develop curricula for paraprofessional training.
Activity C:	Provide seed money to establish paraprofessional training programs as needed.
Goal 4: Create a linked system of pre-service and in-service training to ensure parents and personnel are prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities.	
Objective 4.1:	<u>Identify and implement training formats that are accessible to parents, working adults and full-time students, resulting in 20% more students completing higher education course work.</u>
Activity A:	Through the <i>Improving Results Initiative</i> , convene an Accessible Training Committee that includes higher education, school districts, the Idaho Department of Education and other representatives.
Activity B:	Identify and evaluate alternative methods of providing personnel development such as distance education, Internet, cross-institutional course work, professional development schools, etc.
Activity C:	Identify and address personnel and other resource needs; barriers; incentives; and structures that allow or inhibit development and maintenance of accessible personnel development programs.
Activity D:	Provide subgrants to institutions of higher education to establish or expand accessible programs.

Activity E: Evaluate the success and needs of new delivery methods and make adjustments as needed.

Objective 4.2: Using a collaborative approach, provide joint training and technical assistance opportunities for parents, general educators, special educators, related services providers and administrators, on prioritized topics, at least eight times per year in all three regions of Idaho.

Activity A: Through a partnership between Idaho Department of Education regional consultants and Idaho Parents Unlimited parent consultants, create a mechanism that will support the delivery of joint training and technical assistance to parents and school personnel.

Activity B: Through a partnership between Idaho Department of Education and Idaho Parents Unlimited, plan and conduct a joint needs assessment of educator and parent skills related to meeting the needs of students with disabilities, including best practice areas of Results-Based service delivery, early childhood, secondary transition, behavior management, and the needs of students who are limited English proficient.

Activity C: Provide professional development to both Idaho Department of Education regional consultants and Idaho Parents Unlimited parent consultants regarding methods of collaborative training.

Activity D: Develop a comprehensive training and technical assistance plan and materials that support State and Local Improvement Plans and additional needs as identified through data collection and student assessments.

Activity E: Deliver training to parents and school personnel using joint training mechanisms and training resources.

Objective 4.3: Create a Training Clearinghouse to match the training and technical assistance needs and resources of Idaho educators and parents, resulting in cost-effective and coordinated training resources.

Activity A: Identify and prioritize ongoing training needs by:

- Analyzing data gathered as a result of a need assessment conducted through a joint effort by Idaho Department of Education and Idaho Parents Unlimited; and
- Formulating and making recommendations to the Idaho Department of Education regarding training needs, methods of delivery and target audiences.

Activity B: Identify and catalog existing training resources including university course work, training faculty, consultants, self-directed course work packages, video training packages, and other resources available through the Department of Education, Idaho Parents Unlimited, colleges and universities, and school districts as appropriate.

Activity C: Identify gaps and recommend training resources to address them.

Activity D: Assist educators, school districts, parents, and colleges and universities in matching training needs (topic and delivery format) with training resources.

Activity E: Ensure cost-effective training by linking, where possible, individuals or agencies with similar training needs.

Goal 5: Ensure adequate numbers of qualified personnel are available to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities.

Objective 5.1: Improve data collection and analysis to develop accurate and specific five-year projections for personnel recruitment and retention efforts, which identify the number of personnel needed for each occupational category.

Activity A:	Collect and analyze data from multiple sources on factors that impact the supply and demand for special education teachers, administrators and related services providers in Idaho.
Activity B:	Disseminate the results of data collection and analysis to institutions of higher education, local education agencies and other partners to facilitate their planning efforts.
Activity C:	Use results to revise or refine State Improvement Plan Grant activities as appropriate.
Objective 5.2:	<u>Design and implement strategies and incentives to continuously recruit an increased number of individuals into all levels of career lattice training programs and to provide supports for those recruits, with an emphasis on individuals with disabilities, native speakers of key languages spoken in the state, and individuals of color.</u>
Activity A:	Provide subgrants to institutions of higher education to provide incentives to paraprofessional trainees who are employed in Idaho schools.
Activity B:	Conduct an awareness campaign seeking assistance from all partners to encourage high school students, practicing paraprofessionals, and professionals to enter advanced personnel preparation programs in special education and related fields.
Activity C:	Provide subgrants to institutions of higher education to design and implement incentive programs for special education teacher, administrator and related service provider trainees in return for a commitment to provide service in Idaho schools.
Activity D:	Target recruiting efforts and incentive programs, and provide support to individuals with disabilities, native speakers of key languages present in the state, and individuals of color.
Objective 5.3:	<u>Retain qualified personnel in employment by implementing key strategies to improve working conditions and job satisfaction, thereby reducing the special education attrition rate by 3%.</u>
Activity A:	Adopt state policies and/or recommend local policies concerning scheduling issues that provide special educators with adequate time for paperwork, lesson preparation, and collaboration with general educators and parents.
Activity B:	Provide information to district and school administrators on strategies for retaining special educators at statewide and regional administrative meetings.
Activity C:	Provide subgrants to local education agencies to train personnel on computer software to reduce paperwork.
Activity D:	Advocate for salary indices for special education personnel that provide incentives for personnel to accept and retain employment in public schools.
Objective 5.4:	<u>Increase the number of qualified candidates applying for special education and related service vacancies in Idaho.</u>
Activity A:	Gain consensus on the need for and the features of a statewide on-line education employment board among key stakeholders representing the following: local education agencies; Idaho Association of School Administrators; Idaho State Department of Education; and institutions of higher education.
Activity B:	Develop a statewide on-line educational employment board that addresses the needs identified by the key stakeholders.

Goal 6: Effectively administer, systematically evaluate, and continuously improve the project through a partnership among the Idaho Department of Education, local education agencies, Idaho Parents Unlimited and institutions of higher education.

Objective 6.1: Provide administrative oversight for the *Improving Results Initiative*.

- Activity A: Designated Idaho Department of Education staff will oversee and guide implementation of specific project activities.
- Activity B: Designated Idaho Department of Education staff will work in collaboration with key project partners to ensure timely and effective completion of subgrants and contracts.
- Activity C: Use a variety of tools including charts, graphs and software to plan, manage and document completion of each project activity.

Objective 6.2: Implement the evaluation plan.

- Activity A: Obtain commitment of individuals from the Idaho Department of Education, local education agencies, Idaho Parents Unlimited and institutions of higher education to participate in a collaborative Evaluation Partnership.
- Activity B: Coordinate the Evaluation Partnership to identify, design and carry out a matrix of evaluation activities to measure process and outcomes of the *Improving Results Initiative*.

Objective 6.3: Using information and data gathered through the evaluation plan, and adjust activities to improve project effectiveness.

- Activity A: The Evaluation Partnership will review evaluation results annually and recommend changes needed in the State Improvement Grant.
- Activity B: Revise objectives, activities, budgets, personnel assignments, subgrants and contracts as necessary to address Evaluation Partnership recommendations.

Objective 6.4: Identify and conduct research associated with the goals, objectives and activities of the *Improving Results Initiative*.

- Activity A: The Evaluation Partnership will identify research topics that support evaluation activities and provide needed information to the fields of education and disability in Idaho and nationally.
- Activity B: Develop, publicize and award mini-research grants to graduate students, local education agency personnel, and higher education faculty to conduct the research identified by the Evaluation Partnership.

Objective 6.5: Disseminate materials developed, findings and best practices identified through evaluation and research activities to state and national audiences.

- Activity A: Information regarding activities and evaluation of the *Improving Results Initiative* will be presented at statewide and national conferences.
- Activity B: Report information and results regarding the State Improvement Grant to the Idaho State Legislature annually in *Serving Exceptional Children: A Report to the Idaho Legislature*.
- Activity C: Prepare related journal articles and submit them to journals such as Career Development for Exceptional Individuals; Parenting Exceptional Children; Educational Leadership; Journal of Staff Development; and Phi Delta Kappan.

Table 2.
Key Indicators

Goal 1: Implement state and local policies and procedures that strengthen the capacity of schools to improve educational results for all students, including students with disabilities.

- ☒ *Short-term* - Documents contain current and accurate material
- ☒ *Intermediate* - PGI data is accurate and relates to performance of students
- ☒ *Long-term* - Appropriate change in PGIs and improvement in achievement scores

Goal 2: Enhance the capacity of parents, especially parents of students with disabilities, to effectively participate in and influence school reform activities and their children's educational progress.

- ☒ *Short-term* – Documents and training information contain accurate information
- ☒ *Long-term* – Increasing numbers of parents have meaningful participation

Goal 3: Revise professional and paraprofessional standards, certification requirements and personnel development programs for the purpose of redefining personnel skills necessary to improve results for children and youth with disabilities.

- ☒ *Short-term* - Standards are in-place.
- ☒ *Intermediate* - Personnel development programs that are based on the standards are available.
- ☒ *Long term* - Increased enrollment in personnel development programs.

Goal 4: Create a linked system of pre-service and in-service training to ensure parents and personnel are prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

- ☒ *Short term* - Needs are identified and accessible training is developed.
- ☒ *Intermediate* - Web-site that lists all pre- and in-service training is in place.
- ☒ *Long term* - Increase in participation in collaboratively developed trainings.

Goal 5: Ensure adequate numbers of qualified personnel are available to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities.

- ☒ *Short term* - ISDE projections provide useful data for planning.
- ☒ *Intermediate* - Increased qualified recruitment into areas of personnel deficit.
- ☒ *Long term* - Attrition rates of qualified teachers decreases.

Goal 6: Effectively administer, systematically evaluate, and continuously improve the project through a partnership among the Idaho Department of Education, local education agencies, Idaho Parents Unlimited and institutions of higher education.